ACADEMY CLASSICS

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

SHAKESPEARE

ALLYN AND BACON

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

Act IV. Scene 1.

The Academy Classics

SHAKESPEARE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

EDITED WITH A LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE, AN ACCOUNT OF THE THEATRE IN HIS TIME, AND NUMEROUS AIDS TO THE STUDY OF THE PLAY

BY

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ALLYN AND BACON

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FOREWORD

THE aim of this edition is to present the play in a simple and straightforward manner, supplying such information as may be most helpful to those who have no ready access to good libraries. Modern high school students have much to occupy their attention; they are not inclined, as a rule, to search out references to other books. Many of them approach the reading of the classics in general, and of Shakespeare's plays in particular, with little or no literary background; many are handicapped, too, by the growth in school attendance and the consequent inadequacy of reference material.

For these reasons the following features have been introduced into this edition of the play: an account of Shakespeare, the man — his life, work, reputation, and the theatre for which he wrote; a brief summary of facts relating to the sources and publication of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; some suggestions for acting the play in schools; a full and informational body of notes; and a list of practical topics for oral and written composition.

It is hoped that the material which the editors have thus incorporated in the Appendix will not only increase the interest of the student, but may also serve to lighten the labor of the teacher.

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SAMUEL THURBER, JR.
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CONTENTS

PAGE

List of Illustrations vii

Milton's Sonnet on Shakespeare ix

Characters of the Play 1, 79

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM 1

Appendix

The Writing and Publication of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" 81
The Origin of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" . . . 86
What Shakespeare Intended 93
Playing "A Midsummer Night's Dream" 103
What We Know about Shakespeare 111
Shakespeare's Plays and Poems 124
Shakespeare's Popularity in His Own Day . . . 138
Shakespeare's Fame since His Death 143
The Theatre of Shakespeare's Day 152
Books of Interest to Students of Shakespeare . . . 174

Explanatory Notes 177

Subjects for Oral and Written Composition . . . 216

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
— Act IV, Scene 1 . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Come, my Hippolyta.
— Act I, Scene 1 1

Answer as I call you.
— Act I, Scene 2 11

I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moone's sphere.
— Act II, Scene 1 14

Then slip I from her, and down topples she.
— Act II, Scene 1 16

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song.
— Act II, Scene 2 23

Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! thou art translated!
— Act III, Scene 1 33

How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?
— Act III, Scene 2 36

Look, when I vow, I weep.
— Act III, Scene 2 40

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
— Act III, Scene 2 50

Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?
— Act IV, Scene 1 55

List of Illustrations.

FACING PAGE

There lies your love.
— Act IV, Scene 1 56

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
— Act V, Scene 1 67

Shakespeare's House at Stratford-on-Avon 114
The Room Where Shakespeare Was Born 114
Anne Hathaway's Cottage at Shottery 116
Interior of Anne Hathaway's Cottage 116
Holy Trinity Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon . . . 122
Inscription on Shakespeare's Tomb 122
Inscription on Shakespeare's Monument, Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon 122
The Globe Theatre 160
Interior of an Elizabethan Theatre 160

SHAKESPEARE

What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
The labor of an age in piléd stones?
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavoring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepúlchred, in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

JOHN MILTON.

Come, my Hippolyta.

— Act I. Scene 1.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.
LYSANDER, } in love with Her-
DEMETRIUS, } mia.
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.
QUINCE, a Carpenter.
SNUG, a Joiner.
BOTTOM, a Weaver.
FLUTE, a Bellows-mender.
SNOUT, a Tinker.
STARVELING, a Tailor.
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, Daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

OBERON, King of the Fairies.
TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies.
PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.
PEASE-BLOSSOM, } Fairies.
COBWEB, }
MOTH, }
MUSTARD-SEED, }

Other Fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE. — *Athens, and a Wood near it.*

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *Athens. The Palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, *and* Attendants.

Theseus. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace: four happy days bring in
Another moon; but O! methinks how slow
This old moon wanes; she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hippolyta. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.
Theseus. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp. [*Exit* PHILOS.
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, *and* DEMETRIUS.

Egeus. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!
Theseus. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?
Egeus. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchange'd love-tokens with my child;
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love;
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy

With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth;
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart;
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to this gentleman,
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

Theseus. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd, fair maid.
To you, your father should be as a god;
One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Hermia. So is Lysander.

Theseus. In himself he is;
But, in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

Hermia. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

Theseus. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

Hermia. I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty

In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your Grace, that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

Theseus. Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whe'r, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

Hermia. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

Theseus. Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon, —
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship, —
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

Demetrius. Relent, sweet Hermia; and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.
Lysander. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.
Egeus. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him;
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.
Lysander. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.
Theseus. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come;
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will,
Or else the law of Athens yields you up,
Which by no means we may extenuate,

To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Egeus. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, DEMETRIUS, *and Train.*

Lysander. How now, my love! Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Hermia. Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes.

Lysander. Ay me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood, —

Hermia. O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Lysander. Or else misgraffed in respect of years, —

Hermia. O spite! too old to be engag'd to young.

Lysander. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends, —

Hermia. O hell! to choose love by another's eye.

Lysander. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentany as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say, 'Behold!'

The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.
Hermia. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.
Lysander. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.
Hermia. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Troyan under sail was seen,
By all the vows that ever men have broke, —
In number more than ever women spoke. —

In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lysander. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Hermia. God speed fair Helena! Whither away?

Helena. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars! and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O! were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I'd give to be with you translated.
O! teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Hermia. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

Helena. O! that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill.

Hermia. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Helena. O! that my prayers could such affection move.

Hermia. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Helena. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Hermia. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

Helena. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

Hermia. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face:
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:
O! then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto hell.
Lysander. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.
To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass, —
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal, —
Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.
Hermia. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us;
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.
Lysander. I will, my Hermia. — [*Exit* HERMIA.] Helena, adieu:
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*
Helena. How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she;
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know;
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjur'd every where;
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *The Same.* *A Room in* QUINCE'S *House.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quince. Is all our company here?

Bottom. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quince. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess on his wedding-day at night.

Answer as I call you.

— Act I. Scene 2.

Bottom. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

Quince. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

Bottom. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

Quince. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bottom. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quince. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bottom. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quince. A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

Bottom. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

> The raging rocks
> And shivering shocks
> Shall break the locks
> Of prison gates:
> And Phibbus' car
> Shall shine from far
> And make and mar
> The foolish Fates.

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quince. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flute. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. You must take Thisby on you.

Flute. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

Quince. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flute. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quince. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bottom. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne!' 'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear; thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

Quince. No, no; you must play Pyramus; and Flute, you Thisby.

Bottom. Well, proceed.

Quince. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Starveling. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. You, Pyramus's father; myself, Thisby's father; Snug, the joiner, you the lion's part: and, I hope here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quince. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bottom. Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

Quince. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bottom. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you as 'twere any nightingale.

Quince. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man; therefore, you must needs play Pyramus.

Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quince. Why, what you will.

Bottom. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quince. Well, masters, here are your parts; and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight: there will we rehearse; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bottom. We will meet; and there we may rehearse more obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect; adieu.

Quince. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bottom. Enough; hold, or cut bow-strings.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

Scene I. — *A Wood near Athens.*

Enter a Fairy *on one side, and* Puck *on the other.*

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?
Fairy. (Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moone's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In their freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits: I'll be gone;
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.
Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night.
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she, perforce, witholds the loved boy,

I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moone's sphere:

— Act II. Scene 1.

Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove, or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square; that all their elves, for fear,
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are you not he
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are you not he?

Puck. Fairy, thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her, and down topples she,
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh;
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear

A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

Fairy. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

Enter OBERON *from one side, with his Train; and* TITANIA *from the other, with hers.*

Oberon. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

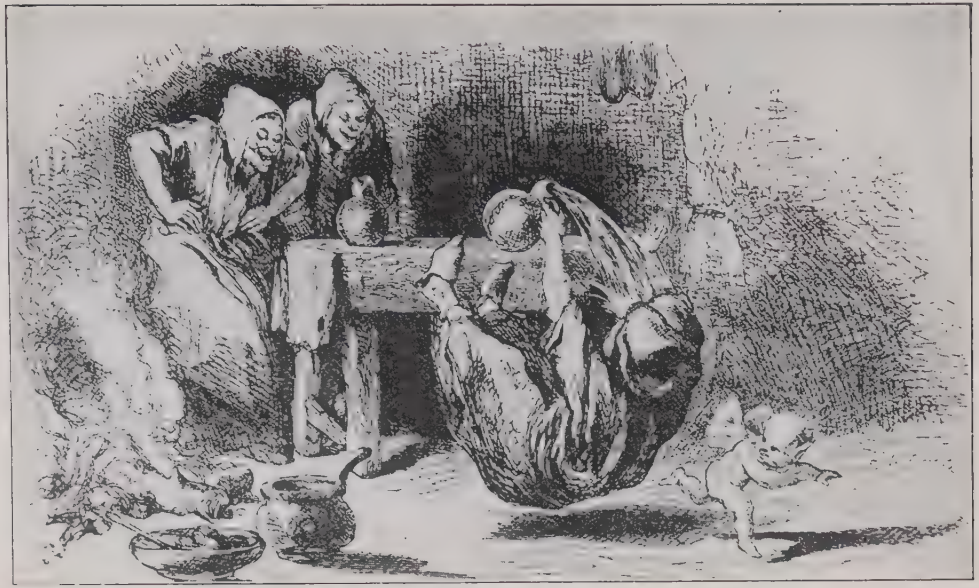
Titania. What! jealous Oberon. Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Oberon. Tarry, rash wanton! am not I thy lord?

Titania. Then, I must be thy lady; but I know
When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the furthest steppe of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Oberon. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
And make him with fair Aegle break his faith,
With Ariadne, and Antiopa?

Titania. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,



Then slip I from her, and down topples she.

— Act II. Scene 1

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter here:
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evil comes
From our debate, from our dissension:

We are their parents and original.
Oberon. Do you amend it then; it lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.
Titania. Set your heart at rest;
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake I do rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.
Oberon. How long within this wood intend you stay?
Titania. Perchance, till after-Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.
Oberon. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.
Titania. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.
[*Exit* TITANIA *with her Train.*
Oberon. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,

That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea maid's music.
Puck. I remember.
Oberon. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it, Love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.
Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [*Exit.*
Oberon. Having once this juice
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,

On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
And ere I take this charm off from her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible,
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA *following him.*

Demetrius. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n into this wood;
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence! get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Helena. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant:
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Demetrius. Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?

Helena. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,
And yet a place of high respect with me,
Than to be used as you use your dog?

Demetrius. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on you.
Helena. And I am sick when I look not on you.
Demetrius. You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city, and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not.
Helena. Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor does this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?
Demetrius. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.
Helena. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd;
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger: bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.
Demetrius. I will not stay thy questions: let me go;
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.
Helena. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.

[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

Oberon. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Oberon. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.
[*Exeunt.*

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song.
— Act II. Scene 2.

SCENE II. — *Another Part of the Wood.*

Enter TITANIA, *with her Train.*

Titania. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third of a minute, hence;
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

The Fairies sing.

I.

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen;
Newts, and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby:
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

II.

Weaving spiders come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody, &c.

Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well.
One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies.* TITANIA *sleeps.*

Enter OBERON, *and squeezes the flower on* TITANIA'S *eyelids.*

Oberon. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love and languish for his sake:
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near. [*Exit.*

Enter LYSANDER *and* HERMIA.

Lysander. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.
Hermia. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.
[*Retires a little distance.*
Lysander. Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!
Hermia. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd! [*They sleep.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence! who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:

This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
[*Squeezes the flower on* LYSANDER'S *eyelids.*
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon. [*Exit.*

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA, *running.*

Helena. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Demetrius. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Helena. O! wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Demetrius. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.
[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.

Helena. O! I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, whersoe'er she lies;
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
For beasts that meet me run away for fear;
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's spery eyne?
But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lysander. [*Awaking.*] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O! how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword.

Helena. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord! what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

Lysander. Content with Hermia! No: I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season;
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Helena. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor ever can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O! that a lady of one man refus'd,
Should of another therefore be abus'd. [*Exit.*

Lysander. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there;
And never mayst thou come Lysander near.
For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;
Or, as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive:
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me!
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honour Helen, and to be her knight. [*Exit.*

Hermia. [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! what! remov'd? — Lysander! lord!
What! out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack! where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves! I swound almost with fear.
No! then I well perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [*Exit.*]

ACT

SCENE I. — *A Wood.* TITANIA *lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Bottom. Are we all met?

Quince. Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

Bottom. Peter Quince, —

Quince. What sayst thou, bully Bottom?

Bottom. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

Snout. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Starveling. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bottom. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

Quince. Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bottom. No, make it two more: let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Starveling. I fear it, I promise you.

Bottom. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in, — God shield us! — a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to it.

Snout. Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bottom. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, 'Ladies,' or, 'Fair ladies,' 'I would wish you,' or, 'I would request you,' or, 'I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing: I am a man as other men are;' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

Quince. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things, that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snug. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bottom. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanack; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quince. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bottom. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quince. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or

to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snug. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bottom. Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quince. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake; and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK, *behind.*

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What! a play toward; I'll be an auditor;
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

Quince. Speak, Pyramus. — Thisby, stand forth.

Bottom. *Thisby, the flowers have odious savours sweet,* —

Quince. Odorous, odorous.

Bottom. — *odours savours sweet:*
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear. [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here! [*Exit.*

Flute. Must I speak now?

Quince. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand, he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flute. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee, Pyramus at Ninny's tomb.

Quince. 'Ninus' tomb,' man. Why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is 'never tire.'

Flute. O! — *As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.*

Re-enter PUCK, *and* BOTTOM *with an ass's head.*

Bottom. If I were, fair Thisby, I were only thine.

Quince. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! — Help! [*Exeunt* Clowns.

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [*Exit.*

Bottom. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bottom. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [*Exit* SNOUT.

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quince. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. [*Exit.*

Bottom. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill.

Titania. [*Awaking.*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bottom. The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer, nay;

for indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

Titania. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force, perforce, doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bottom. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! thou art translated!

— Act III. Scene 1.

Titania. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bottom. Not so, neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Titania. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whe'r thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate;
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Pease-blossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustard-seed!

Enter Four Fairies.

Pease-blossom. Ready.
Cobweb. And I.
Moth. And I.
Mustard-seed. And I.
All Four. Where shall we go?

Titania. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Pease-blossom. Hail, mortal!

Cobweb. Hail!

Moth. Hail! 170

Mustard-seed. Hail!

Bottom. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cobweb. Cobweb. 174

Bottom. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

Pease-blossom. Pease-blossom. 178

Bottom. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Pease-blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mustard-seed. Mustard-seed. 183

Bottom. Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed. 189

Titania. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks, looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *Another Part of the Wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Oberon. I wonder if Titania be awak'd;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.
Here comes my messenger.

Enter PUCK.

How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?
Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take;
An ass's nowl I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimick comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky;
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania wak'd and straightway lov'd an ass.

Oberon. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

Puck. I took him sleeping, — that is finish'd too, —
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HERMIA.

Oberon. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman; but not this the man.

Demetrius. O! why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Hermia. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in knee deep,
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stol'n away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon

How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

— Act III. Scene 2.

May through the centre creep, and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.
Demetrius. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.
Hermia. What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah! good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?
Demetrius. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.
Hermia. Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O! once tell true, tell true, e'en for my sake;
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.
Demetrius. You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood,
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.
Hermia. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.
Demetrius. An if I could, what should I get therefore?
Hermia. A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so;
See me no more, whe'r he be dead or no. [*Exit.*

Demetrius. There is no following her in this fierce vein:
Here therefore for awhile I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Oberon. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true-love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Oberon. About the wood go swifter than the wind
And Helena of Athens look thou find:
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go;
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*

Oberon. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Oberon. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HELENA.

Lysander. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

Helena. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows, to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

Lysander. I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Helena. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lysander. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Demetrius. [*Awaking.*] O Helen! goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O! how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow;
This pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O! let me kiss
That princess of pure white, this seal of bliss.

Helena. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lysander. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;

Look, when I vow, I weep.

— Act III. Scene 2.

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do to my death.
Helena. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.
Demetrius. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none.
If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
And now to Helen it is home return'd,
There to remain.
Lysander. Helen, it is not so.
Demetrius. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.
Look! where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA.

Hermia. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?
Lysander. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?
Hermia. What love could press Lysander from my side?
Lysander. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

Hermia. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.
Helena. Lo! she is one of this confederacy.
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sister-vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us, O! is it all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needs created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.
Hermia. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Helena. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face,
And made your other love, Demetrius, —
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot, —
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most to love unlov'd?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Hermia. I understand not what you mean by this.

Helena. Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But, fare ye well: 'tis partly mine own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lysander. Stay, gentle Helena! hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Helena. O excellent!

Hermia. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Demetrius. If she cannot entreat, I can compel,

Lysander. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee; by my life I do:

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.
Demetrius. I say I love thee more than he can do.
Lysander. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.
Demetrius. Quick, come!
Hermia. Lysander, whereto tends all this?
Lysander. Away, you Ethiop!
Hermia. No, no, he'll . . .
Demetrius. Seem to break loose; take on, as you would follow,
But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!
Lysander. [*To* HERMIA.] Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose.
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.
Hermia. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this,
Sweet love,—
Lysander. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated poison, hence!
Hermia. Do you not jest?
Helena. Yes, sooth; and so do you.
Lysander. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.
Demetrius. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.
Lysander. What! should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.
Hermia. What! can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you lov'd me; yet, since night you left me:
Why, then you left me, — O, the gods forbid! —
In earnest, shall I say?
Lysander. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer: 'tis no jest,
That I do hate thee and love Helena.
Hermia. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what! have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?
Helena. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What! will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet you!
Hermia. Puppet! why, so: ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures: she hath urg'd her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
Helena. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;

I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.
Hermia. Lower! hark, again.
Helena. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.
Hermia. Why, get you gone. Who is't that hinders you?
Helena. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.
Hermia. What! with Lysander?
Helena. With Demetrius.
Lysander. Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena.
Demetrius. No, sir; she shall not, though you take her part.
Helena. O! when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd.
She was a vixen when she went to school:
And though she be but little, she is fierce.
Hermia. 'Little' again! nothing but 'low' and 'little!'
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

Lysander. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn!
Demetrius. You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone; speak not of Helena;
Take not her part, for, if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.
Lysander. Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
Or thine or mine, is most in Helena.
Demetrius. Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt* LYSANDER *and* DEMETRIUS.

Hermia. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:
Nay, go not back.
Helena. I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*
Hermia. I am amaz'd, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*
Oberon. This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully.
Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Oberon. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron;
And lead these testy rivals so astray,
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision;
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;

For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.
Oberon. But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit* OBERON.
Puck. Up and down, up and down;
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town;
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lysander. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.
Puck. Here, villain! drawn and ready. Where art thou?
Lysander. I will be with thee straight.
Puck. Follow me, then,
To plainer ground. [*Exit* LYSANDER *as following the voice.*

Re-enter DEMETRIUS.

Demetrius. Lysander! speak again.
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?
Puck. Thou coward! art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,

And wilt not come? Come recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defil'd
That draws a sword on thee.
Demetrius. Yea, art thou there?
Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.
[*Exeunt.*

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lysander. He goes before me and still dares me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*

Re-enter PUCK *and* DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho! ho! ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?
Demetrius. Abide me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?
Puck. Come hither: I am here.
Demetrius. Nay then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed:
By day's approach look to be visited.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
— Act III. Scene 2.

Re-enter HELENA.

Helena. O weary night! O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! shine, comforts, from the east!
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds make up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Hermia. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!

[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy
[*Squeezing the juice on* LYSANDER'S *eyes.*
When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight

In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again,
And all shall be well. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A Wood.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA *and* HERMIA *lying asleep.*

Enter TITANIA *and* BOTTOM, *Fairies attending;* OBERON *behind unseen.*

Titania. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bottom. Where's Pease-blossom?

Pease-blossom. Ready.

Bottom. Scratch my head. Pease-blossom. Where's Mounsieur Cobweb?

Cobweb. Ready.

Bottom. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you over-

flown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustard-seed?

Mustard-seed. Ready.

Bottom. Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustard-seed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Mustard-seed. What's your will?

Bottom. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur, for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Titania. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bottom. I have a reasonable good ear in music: let us have the tongs and the bones.

Titania. Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.

Bottom. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Titania. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.

Bottom. I had rather have a handful or two of dried pease. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Titania. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt Fairies.*
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O! how I love thee; how I dote on thee! [*They sleep.*

Enter PUCK.

Oberon. [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity:
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes:
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That he, awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

[*Touching her eyes with an herb.*

Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see:

Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?

— Act IV. Scene 1.

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.
Titania. My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.
Oberon. There lies your love.
Titania. How came these things to pass?
O! how mine eyes do loathe his visage now.
Oberon. Silence, awhile. Robin, take off this head.
Titania, music call; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.
Titania. Music, ho! music! such as charmeth sleep.
[*Music, still.*
Puck. When thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.
Oberon. Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair prosperity.
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.
Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark:
I do hear the morning lark.
Oberon. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after the night's shade;
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon.
Titania. Come, my lord; and in our flight

Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.
[*Exeunt. Horns winded within.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and Train.*

Theseus. Go, one of you, find out the forester;
For now our observation is perform'd;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hippolyta. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

Theseus. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:

There lies your love.

— Act IV. Scene 1.

Judge, when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?
Egeus. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
I wonder of their being here together.
Theseus. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.
But speak, Egeus, is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?
Egeus. It is, my lord.
Theseus. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
[*Horns and shout within.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA, *wake and start up.*
Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?
Lysander. Pardon, my lord. [*He and the rest kneel.*
Theseus. I pray you all, stand up.
I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?
Lysander. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here;
But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,
And now I do bethink me, so it is, —
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law —

Egeus. Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough:
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stol'n away; they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me;
You of your wife, and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.
Demetrius. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither, to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power, —
But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,
Melted as doth the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.
Theseus. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple, by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit:
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us, to Athens: three and three,

We 'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and Train.*

Demetrius. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Hermia. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When everything seems double.

Helena. So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

Demetrius. Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do you not think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Hermia. Yea; and my father.

Helena. And Hippolyta.

Lysander. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Demetrius. Why then, we are awake. Let 's follow him
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*

Bottom. [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God 's my life! stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was — there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, — and methought I had, — but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the

ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *Athens. A Room in* QUINCE'S *House.*

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quince. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Starveling. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flute. If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quince. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flute. No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quince. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute. You must say, 'paragon': a paramour is, God bless us! a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flute. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped

sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I 'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bottom. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quince. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bottom. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

Quince. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bottom. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go; away. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *Athens. An Apartment in the Palace of* THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, LORDS, *and* Attendants.

Hippolyta. 'T is strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

Theseus. More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear!

Hippolyta. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigur'd so together,

More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy,
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Theseus. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Lysander. More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

Theseus. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

Philostrate. Here, mighty Theseus.

Theseus. Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?
What masque? what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Philostrate. There is a brief how many sports are ripe;
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Gives a paper.*

Theseus. *The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung*
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.
We 'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,

Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.
That is an old device; and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceas'd in beggary.
That is some satire keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

Philostrate. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

Theseus. What are they that do play it?

Philostrate. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

Theseus. And we will hear it.

Philostrate. No, my noble lord;
It is not for you: I have heard it over,

And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
Unless you can find sport in their intents
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,
To do you service.

Theseus. I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit* PHILOSTRATE.

Hippolyta. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd,
And duty in his service perishing.

Theseus. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hippolyta. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

Theseus. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears,
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.

Philostrate. So please your Grace, the Prologue is address'd.

Theseus. Let him approach. [*Flourish of Trumpets.*

Enter QUINCE *for the* PROLOGUE.

Prologue. *If we offend, it is with our good will.*
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
You shall know all that you are like to know.

Theseus. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lysander. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hippolyta. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

Theseus. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

Enter PYRAMUS *and* THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, *and* LION, *as in dumb show.*

Prologue. *Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;*
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
— Act V. Scene 1.

This beauteous lady Thisby is, certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

[*Exeunt* Prologue, Pyramus, Thisbe, Lion, *and* Moonshine.

Theseus. I wonder, if the lion be to speak.

Demetrius. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,

Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so;
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

Theseus. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Demetrius. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Theseus. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Re-enter PYRAMUS.

Pyramus. *O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!*
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night! O night! alack, alack, alack!
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot.
And thou, O wall! O sweet, O lovely wall!
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine;
Thou wall, O wall! O sweet, and lovely wall!
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.

[WALL *holds up his fingers.*

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall! through whom I see no bliss;
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

Theseus. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyramus. No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me,' is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy

her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Re-enter THISBE.

Thisbe. *O wall! full often hast thou heard my moans,*
For parting my fair Pyramus and me:
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.
Pyramus. *I see a voice: now will I to the chink,*
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
Thisby!
Thisby. *My love! thou art my love, I think.*
Pyramus. *Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;*
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.
Thisby. *And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.*
Pyramus. *Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.*
Thisby. *As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.*
Pyramus. *O! kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.*
Thisby. *I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.*
Pyramus. *Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?*
Thisby. *'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.*
[*Exeunt* PYRAMUS *and* THISBE.

Wall. *Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;*
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. [*Exit.*

Theseus. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

Demetrius. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

Hippolyta. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

Theseus. The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hippolyta. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

Theseus. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Re-enter LION *and* MOONSHINE.

Lion. *You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear*
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam:
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 't were pity on my life.

Theseus. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Demetrius. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lysander. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

Theseus. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Demetrius. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose.

Theseus. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour, for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

Moon. *This lanthorn doth the horned moon present;—*

Demetrius. He should have worn the horns on his head.

Theseus. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

Moon. *This lanthorn doth the horned moon present; Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.*

Theseus. This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn: how is it else the man i' the moon?

Demetrius. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.

Hippolyta. I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

Theseus. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lysander. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.

Demetrius. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisbe.

Re-enter THISBE.

Thisbe. *This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?*

Lion. [*Roaring.*] *Oh* — . [THISBE *runs off.*

Demetrius. Well roared, Lion.

Theseus. Well run, Thisbe.

Hippolyta. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[*The* LION *tears* THISBE'S *mantle, and exit.*

Theseus. Well moused, Lion.

Demetrius. And then came Pyramus.

Lysander. And so the lion vanished.

Re-enter PYRAMUS.

Pyramus. *Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;*
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright,
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering streams,
I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.
But stay, O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle good,
What! stain'd with blood!
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum;
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

Theseus. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hippolyta. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyramus. *Oh! wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?*
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear?
Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame
That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.
Come tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus:
Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop:
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. [*Stabs himself.*
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light!
Moon, take thy flight!
[*Exit* MOONSHINE.
Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

Demetrius. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lysander. Less than an ace, man, for he is dead; he is nothing.

Theseus. With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hippolyta. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

Theseus. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

Re-enter THISBE.

Hippolyta. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Demetrius. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lysander. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Demetrius. And thus she moans, *videlicet:* —

Thisbe. *Asleep, my love?*
What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak! Quite dumb?
Dead, dead! A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone:
Lovers, make moan!
His eyes were green as leeks.
O, Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword:
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs herself.*
And farewell, friends;
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu. [*Dies.*

Theseus. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Demetrius. Ay, and Wall too.

Bottom. No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

Theseus. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus, and hanged himself in This-

be's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*
The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve;
Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels, and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:

I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON *and* TITANIA, *with their Train.*

Oberon. Through the house give glimmering light
By the dead and drowsy fire;
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier;
And this ditty after me
Sing and dance it trippingly.

Titania. First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.

[*Song and dance.*

Oberon. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace;
And the owner of it blest,
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away;
Make no stay;
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt* OBERON, TITANIA, *and Train.*

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,

That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I'm an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends. [*Exit.*

A LIST OF THE PERSONS OF THE DRAMA, WITH THE SCENES IN WHICH THEY OCCUR

THESEUS, *Duke of Athens* . . . I. 1; IV. 1; V. 1.
EGEUS, *Father to* Hermia . . . I. 1; IV. 1.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS } *in love with* Hermia { I. 1; II. 2; III. 2; IV. 1; V. 1. / I. 1; II. 1; II. 2; III. 2; IV. 1; V. 1.

PHILOSTRATE, *Master of the Revels to* Theseus . . . . . I. 1; V. 1.

QUINCE, *a Carpenter* . . . . I. 2; III. 1; IV. 2; V. 1.
SNUG, *a Joiner* . . . . . I. 2; III. 1; IV. 2; V. 1.
BOTTOM, *a Weaver* . . . . . I. 2; III. 1; IV. 1; IV. 2; V. 1.
FLUTE, *a Bellows-mender* . . . I. 2; III. 1; IV. 2; V. I.
SNOUT, *a Tinker* . . . . . I. 2; II. 1; IV. 2; V. 1.
STARVELING, *a Tailor* . . . . I. 2; III. 1; IV. 2; V. 1.

HIPPOLYTA, *Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to* Theseus . . . . I. 1; IV. 1; V. 1.
HERMIA, *Daughter to Egeus, in love with* Lysander . . . . . I. 1; II. 2; III. 2; IV. 1; V. 1.
HELENA, *in love with* Demetrius . I. 1; II. 1; II. 2; III. 2; IV. 1; V. 1.

OBERON, *King of the Fairies* . . II. 1, 2; III. 2; IV. 1.
TITANIA, *Queen of the Fairies* . II. 1; III. 1; IV. 1.
PUCK, *or* ROBIN GOODFELLOW . II. 1, 2; III. 1, 2; IV. 1; V. 1.

PEASE-BLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD-SEED } *Fairies* . . { III. 1; IV. 1. / III. 1; IV. 1. / III. 1. / III. 1; IV. 1.

Other Fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE.—ATHENS, AND A WOOD NEAR IT.

APPENDIX

THE WRITING AND PUBLICATION OF "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Shakespeare wrote his plays and poems during a period of some twenty years, of which 1600 forms the central point. Before that date lie all the lighter comedies and the historical "chronicle" plays; after it come the deeper Comedies and the Tragedies. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" belongs to the former division. As to the exact date when the play was written there is but little evidence, and what there is lies open to discussion. The facts in the case may be briefly stated.

In September, 1600, the play was entered in the Register of the Stationers' Company. This famous old organization, incorporated in 1556, for nearly three hundred years regulated the publication of books in England, by granting licenses to publish. The title-page was as follows:

A
Midsommer Night's dreame
As it hath been sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his servaunts.
Written by William Shakespeare.
Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fisher and are to be soulde at his shoppe, at the signe of the White Hart, in Fleet streete. 1600.

A second edition, now known to have been "pirated" (printed without authority), was published some years later with the same date on the title-page. The play next appeared in the great Folio of 1623, where it comes just before "The Merchant of Venice."

When we look for proof as to the date when the play was written, we find only one piece of evidence which is accepted by all the critics. This is "external" evidence; that is, it comes from a source outside the play. A book called "Palladis Tamia," by Francis Meres,[1] contains a list of Shakespeare's plays which mentions "A Midsummer Night's Dream." As the book appeared in 1598, the play must have been written before that year. How long before?

Difference of opinion.

At this point we come to a divergence of opinion on the part of those who have made a study of such questions. The whole subject is an interesting one and reveals something of the methods followed in trying to ascertain the date of a Shakespeare play. The evidence that we shall look at now is all "internal" — it is found within the play. The first passage which has been supposed to afford definite information is Titania's description of the disordered seasons, II. 1. 87–116. Now the summer of 1594 was just such a season; another writer speaks of it in 1595:

A colder time in world was never seen:
The skies do lour, the sun and moon wax dim;
Summer scarse known, but that the leaves are greene.
The winter's waste drives water ore the brim;
Upon the lande great flotes of wood may swim.

[1] See page 127.

Stowe, a historian of the time, records that food rose to an enormous price because of the damage to crops caused by the heavy rains of May, June, July, and September in 1594. It is argued, therefore, that Shakespeare must have written his play shortly after the summer in question. But Dr. Johnson, one of the clearest-minded of critics, took an entirely different view. "There are not many passages in Shakespeare," he says, "which one can be certain he has borrowed from the Ancients; but this is one of the few that, I think, will admit of no dispute. Our Author's admirable description of the miseries of the country is plainly an imitation of that which Ovid draws, as consequent on the grief of Ceres, for the loss of her daughter." There is yet a third opinion which denies both the views just noted and holds that the picture drawn by Titania owes nothing either to history or to the ancient writers, but is entirely a product of Shakespeare's imagination.

Another passage has been variously treated. It occurs in V. 1. 52–5:

> The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
> Of learning, late deceased in beggary.

These words are said to refer to Robert Greene, poet, dramatist, and University graduate, who died in 1592. He made some boast of the fact that he was *Magister Artibus utriusque Universitatis* — M.A. of both Oxford and Cambridge. In his pamphlet "A Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance," Greene lamented the decay of learning, and bitterly attacked Shakespeare (who was not a University man) as "an upstart crow

beautified with our feathers," and as "in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." This would set a date of 1592, before which the play could not have been written. But here comes in the other side. If it refers to Greene, say the opponents of the view just cited, Shakespeare is performing an act of generosity for which there is no logical reason. "Greene was not distinguished for his learning, nor was he friendly to Shakespeare, — in short, there is no evidence at all that Shakespeare was referring to him."

In spite of their disagreement upon matters of detail, the critics are very generally at one on the conclusion that the play may be assigned to the years 1594–5. This date does not conflict with the date of any other of the early plays which has been established by satisfactory evidence. The general form of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," moreover, fits in well with the early comedies; there is much rhyme, and very slight characterization; while the love of country life and country scenes would seem to indicate a period when the youthful author's mind was still full of fresh memories of the fields and woods about Stratford. One other bit of evidence, and we may leave the matter; it has been accepted without dispute. In their first meeting, and again in the rehearsal, Bottom and his friends are worried over the risk of introducing a lion into their play for fear that it may frighten the ladies (I. 2. 68–70; III. 1. 25–43). A situation similar to this actually occurred at a royal banquet in Scotland on August 30, 1594. It was planned to have a triumphal chariot drawn in by a lion when the feast was at its height. But the organizers of the plan felt — although they had a real

Date 1594–5.

lion on hand — that the royal beast might become unduly excited by the lights and torches and might do just what Bottom and the Rustics feared *their* lion might do. So the car was eventually pulled in by a Negro. No doubt Shakespeare had real life in mind when he drew his Athenian mechanicals.

We may feel reasonably sure, then, that the play was written towards the end of 1594. There are certain indications, too, which seem to show that it was composed for a special occasion and that the occasion was a wedding. It centers about a marriage; the first Act opens with preparations and the last closes with the blessing of the bridal pair. It has all the accessories of music, scenery, and dancing which would make it especially appropriate for presentation at such a time. But what the special occasion was we have no means of finding out; here "we embark upon a wide sea of conjecture, with no chart to guide us." A young nobleman of Elizabeth's Court was married on January 26, 1595. The ceremony was held at Greenwich, where the Queen then resided. Was this the night of the play? It may have been so; but until the evidence is more definite and the critics more in agreement we shall have to be content to leave the matter an open question.

Conclusion.

THE ORIGIN OF "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Originality of the plot.

The plot of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" cannot be traced to any one source; there is no single story which, as so often is the case with Shakespeare, forms the basis of the action. The play is a combination of themes which are in themselves incongruous, but which are welded into an artistic whole by the incomparable skill of the dramatist. We shall concern ourselves briefly with the so-called "source-material," but it should be pointed out that this is, for the most part, nothing more or less than the imagination of the poet.

Books that influenced.

Perhaps in talking of the origin of the plot it is best to speak not of "sources" but of "books that influenced." The framework of the Theseus story, for example, is generally referred to Chaucer's "Knightes Tale," one of the stories told by his Canterbury Pilgrims. But any indebtedness is very slight — being confined, as a matter of fact, to a few names and the idea of a wedding. For the events in the career of Theseus, touched upon in the First, Fourth, and Fifth Acts, Shakespeare probably relied on the *Life of Theseus* in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's "Lives," which was published in 1579; from this book also he seems to have obtained the names of the other Athenians at Court. But it must be remembered that, although Theseus belongs to Greek mythology, in the play he is Greek in name only. He becomes, as drawn by Shakespeare, an English nobleman such as the poet might see any day at the Queen's Court; he has been at the wars and has now

returned to his estate and his country sports. The good Duke possesses qualities which never came out of Plutarch.

If Theseus in the play steps outside his Greek origin, the Athenian "Rustics" have no origin in books at all. Bottom and his friends are pure Warwickshire — familiar to Shakespeare since his childhood in Stratford and doubtless seen many times again on the London streets —

The "Rustics" and the "Fairies."

rude mechanicals
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls.

No book knowledge here; these men stumbled into the play straight from the English countryside. And their "Pyramus and Thisbe" is just the kind of "tedious brief" tragedy which we should expect them to choose. It is not only appropriate to their capacity and taste, but from another point of view, since the theme was well known to Elizabethan audiences, it serves admirably to hold up to good-natured ridicule the cruder dramatic performances of the time.

From the countryside, likewise, came the Fairies. Puck has a long history in folklore; he was in every village before Shakespeare drew him for all the world to see; Moth, Cobweb, and their pretty company danced and sang in the moonlit woods down Stratford way all summer through — they never came from books. Oberon and Titania, however, have a literary history and are found in scattered poems and stories right back to classical times. Oberon (to cite one instance) is the "Auberon" of the medieval romance "Huon of Bordeaux"; Titania appears in the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid, of which a translation

familiar to Shakespeare was published in 1567. But when we have said this, we must add that whatever their sources may have been, in the play they take on new beauty and interest and are vested with a life such as they never had before.

Blending the material.

Given a set of dramatic elements like these, which do not in themselves appear harmonious — how, we may ask, are they to be combined by the playwright into an artistic whole so that the audience shall be conscious of no incongruity? There are four groups to be considered: Theseus and Hippolyta; the Lovers; Oberon and Titania, with Puck and the Fairies; and the Rustics. How are we to be preserved from any sense of incongruity in the relations of these groups? How are we to be made to feel that the events of the play might really happen? Briefly, as follows. The Lovers are sketched in rather slightly — they are a little unreal — and are brought into contact with the unreal Fairies. We thus get the full effect of the Rustics, who are very real indeed. Theseus, who also is real, doesn't believe in Fairies and of course he never sees them; Hippolyta is almost equally skeptical. Finally, the dream idea is kept before us throughout, until the strong blast of the hunting-horns brings back the normal world.

"A strange and beautiful web."

The First Act develops the feeling of dramatic suspense — Rustics and Lovers alike are to meet in the forest. The Second provides the complicating interest, when the Fairies are brought into relation with the Lovers. Act Third shows us the complications at their height: we see their effects upon different groups — Rustics, Lovers,

Fairies. The Fourth Act brings reconciliation and the clearing away of difficulties, while the Fifth is taken up with the performance of the Rustics and the blessing of the bridal pair. It is all so skillfully done that as we watch the play we are conscious of nothing but the charm of the story, and not till we think it over do we realize the amazing unlikeness of the groups that have played their parts before us. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has a wonderful artistic wholeness; a fine blending of poetry and dramatic art. Professor Dowden has summed the matter up. The play, he says, "is a strange and beautiful web, woven delicately by a youthful poet's fancy. What is perhaps most remarkable is the harmonious blending in it of widely different elements. It is as if threads of silken splendor were run together in its texture with a yarn of hempen homespun, and both these with lines of dewy gossamer and filaments drawn from the moonbeams. Taking a little from this quarter and a little from that, Shakespeare created out of such slight materials his magnificent Dream."

"Masque-like" elements in the play.

In some phases of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Shakespeare was undoubtedly influenced by the form of dramatic entertainment known as the "masque," which was much in vogue at the time. The masque was introduced into England from Italy during the reign of Henry VIII — about 1530. Its effects were produced wholly by means of splendid costume, fine music, and beautiful stage-setting; of plot or character development there was nothing. Combined with the masque was the "anti-masque," which contained grotesque and humorous figures in strong con-

trast to the grace and beauty of the masque itself. Their presentation was confined to the wealthy nobles; they were given in palaces and great halls rather than on the public stage. They persisted until well into the seventeenth century, but were finally discontinued on account of the expense: the elaborate "Triumph of Peace," produced in 1634, cost a sum equivalent to $100,000 in our money. Most famous of all masques was Milton's "Comus," given at Ludlow Castle in 1634 in honor of the Earl of Bridgewater. In our play we find all the elements of the masque — music, costume, stage-setting — together with the anti-masque in the Rustics and their absurd tragedy.

The "allegories."

Involved, more or less, with the sources of the play are one or two passages which have given rise to some difference of opinion. The first of these is found in II. 1. 140–6. It is said to present a "political allegory" and, although this theory is not generally accepted, yet it is so ingenious that it may be touched on here. The "mermaid" is Mary Queen of Scots. She succeeded to the throne as a baby on her father's death in 1542; her career was a strange and stormy one which must have been still vivid in the memories of the audiences which saw "A Midsummer Night's Dream." She married the Dauphin of France (the "dolphin"); he died after two years and she went to Scotland in 1561. Her beauty and charm soon won the allegiance of the people — "the rude sea grew civil at her song." She had already laid claim to the English throne on the death of Mary, Queen Elizabeth's sister, in 1558. Then, and on later occasions, some great English noblemen at-

tached themselves to her cause, but were ruined when that cause was lost —

> certain stars shot madly from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maid's music.

She fell into the power of Elizabeth, was imprisoned for nineteen years in various castles, and finally — in 1587 — was beheaded on the ground that she was a menace to the peace and safety of the realm. Her son, James VI of Scotland, became James I of England in 1603. Her life, her sufferings and sad fate, produced a deep impression on the people of England. The other passage (II. 1. 147–56) is obviously a compliment to Queen Elizabeth, who never married and hence is represented "in maiden meditation, fancy free." It was fitting that Shakespeare should shape his graceful compliment to the "fair vestal throned by the west," for he had received from her his first summons to Court and was at this time in the full enjoyment of the royal patronage.

The whole passage from 1. 140 to 1. 158 has been fitted to yet another interpretation, which we mention as a further instance of critical ingenuity. This interpretation connects the lines with the entertainment given to Queen Elizabeth by the Earl of Leicester at his castle of Kenilworth in 1575. The "mermaid" was a part of the water-pageant; the "stars," simply fireworks ("never before or since have fireworks been so glorified"); while the attempt of Cupid to pierce the heart of the "fair vestal throned by the west" represents Leicester's unsuccessful wooing of the Queen. The "little western flower" was the Countess of Essex, whom he afterwards married.

You may take your choice. Perhaps the most rational point of view is reached, however, when we ask why Oberon suddenly drops his allegory and says to Puck: "Fetch me that flower" (line 161). There is a wrench in thought here, if we accept any allegorical interpretation of the preceding lines, which is difficult to account for. On the other hand, if we regard the whole passage as embodying merely some reminiscences of Oberon's, without any hidden meaning, we come to a conclusion which presents no puzzling features. We then have to except only the very graceful compliment to the Queen — the "imperial votaress."

Dramatic position of the play.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" comes at an interesting period in Shakespeare's career. He has completed his early experimenting; he has gained control over the elements of poetry and humor; he shows himself a master of selection and construction. Of character development he has much to learn before he can command the great figures of Shylock, Brutus, or Hamlet; his blank verse, too, is still to grow in flexibility and music before it reaches its full maturity as a medium for the presentation of his thoughts. But the play before us has got free from the sharpness of construction and the mere youthful cleverness seen in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" or "The Comedy of Errors"; at the same time it looks forward to still greater achievement in plotting, style, and characterization. And in itself it stands as a perfectly adequate piece of work — one of the most wholly charming of all Shakespeare's plays.

WHAT SHAKESPEARE INTENDED

Shakespeare, as a practical playwright, always based his plays upon interesting stories. We of to-day, however, sometimes lose sight of the story because we are slightly puzzled by language which is not quite familiar to us and by an arrangement which is a little strange. We cannot see the wood for the trees. But if we examine the thing for ourselves with an open mind, and try to see just what Shakespeare intended to show us, the matter clears up and the story takes on a real interest. Let us look in this way at "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The story element.

To begin with, it is a happy play. It opens with a morning of joy and festivity, wherein the only problem is how to while away the time before the wedding of the two about whom everything centers —Theseus and Hippolyta. Complications and sorrows must arise, of course — else where would be the play — but we know that no real harm can come; the note struck at the first tells us that

Act I.

Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

A little cloud arises to check the proposed rejoicings. Egeus, a worthy — if somewhat fussy — old gentleman, has promised his daughter Hermia to a young Athenian called Demetrius; the daughter prefers Lysander. The matter is brought before the Duke. Lysander, who seems to have a good sense of humor, makes the suggestion:

"You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's; do *you* marry *him*."

Then he points out that Demetrius has engaged himself to another girl — Helena. Theseus, as in duty bound, here takes up the matter, and advises that they compose their differences lest a worse thing befall them. Small comfort to Lysander and Hermia, who lament that

The course of true love never did run smooth.

Then Lysander decides to run away with her and marry her at his aunt's house; for this purpose they will meet in the forest on "the morrow's night." To them enters Helena, all forlorn, and they tell her the plan. She rather selfishly determines to inform Demetrius; he will follow Hermia (naturally) and Helena will at least have an excuse to see and speak to him.

This group of Athenian workmen whom we next find on the stage have somehow got the idea of giving a play in honor of the Duke's wedding. Peter Quince is in charge. He gives out the parts — and Bully Bottom wants to take each in turn. He is going to act Pyramus; "that will ask some tears in the true performing of it," he says. "If I do, let the audience look to their eyes. Yet," he adds, thoughtfully, "my chief humor is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely . . ." and then and there he shows them how rarely he could play it. Quince goes on, but as he arranges with the timid Flute to take Thisbe, Bottom breaks in again: "Let *me* play Thisbe, too." — but Quince won't have it. Then Bottom sets his mind on the Lion; when they fear that he may roar too loud, "I will roar you," he promises, "as gently as any sucking dove;

I will roar you as 'twere any nightingale." This is too much for our stage manager; firmly he lays down the law: "You can play no part but *Pyramus* . . . a sweet-faced man; a proper man . . . a most lovely gentleman-like man; therefore *you* must needs play Pyramus." Bottom can't resist this, and the thing is settled. We see at once that Bottom is a tremendous fellow — big body, big voice, a great idea of his own importance. Quince can manage him by judicious flattery; the others simply stand round and admire. Where shall they rehearse? Where can they practice their parts in secrecy? Why, of course, "meet me in the palace wood," says Quince, "to-morrow night, a mile without the town, by moonlight." What could be better? So off they all troop, with talk and laughter, and we know that some interesting things will happen when all these folk go a-wandering through the still forest glades.

Here is the wood — quiet, moonlit; trees and thickets shining with the night dews. It is just the place for Fairies — and sure enough, there they come. From his own lips we hear of the pranks of Puck, merry wanderer of the night. The Fairy King and Queen chide each other, while their trains of glittering sprites group about them. Titania flits off in anger, passing like a wraith through the leafy spaces; Oberon calls on Puck to help him punish her. But while Puck is gone for the magic flower, we hear strong human voices, echoing loud after the soft tones of the Fairies. It is Helena and Demetrius; she has followed him all this way in hopeless love. Oberon will help the poor maiden; he bids Puck anoint the eyes of disdainful Demetrius, so that his scorn

Act II.

may be turned to love. Then the Fairy King goes to seek out the

bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlip and the nodding violet grows.

In the next scene, after the Queen has been lulled asleep by fairy music, he squeezes the flower on her eyelids:

"What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love and languish for his sake."

The wood is full of sheltered flowery banks and tree-clad slopes. On one Titania sleeps, guarded by her fairy sentinel. Another receives a pair of true lovers, Hermia and Lysander, who have lost their way and must rest till morning. As they slumber Puck glides in, through the night and the silence. Seeing Lysander, he throws over him the charm and darts away to Oberon. Swiftly down another grassy path two figures approach — Demetrius and Helena. He spurns her and rushes off; she, deserted and heart-broken, sees Lysander and wakes him. Now Puck's mistake begins to complicate matters. Lysander looks up, instantly loves her and despises Hermia. But when he declares his love, Helena takes his words for scorn —

"I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady of one man refused,
Should of another therefore be abused!"

She departs; Lysander (creeping past Hermia on tiptoe, and muttering some bitter thing against her) pursues. Hermia wakes up from a terrifying dream — calls on Lysander — finds him gone — and hurries away to seek him.

The Third Act opens with the tramp of heavy feet and the sound of coarse voices. Here come the Rustics, each with his part in his hand; Peter Quince carries a huge roll of manuscript — he is Prompter as well as Stage Manager. Bottom dominates the situation with his ideas as to just how they should do the murder, the Prologue, the Moon, and that "fearful wild-fowl" the Lion. Quince is a little uneasy, but exercises a general control over the rehearsal. Then Puck creeps on the scene; his freakish mischief comes into play, and Bottom suddenly appears from behind some bushes with an ass's head on his shoulders. We can hear Puck's impish laughter as the frightened company disperse "like wild geese." Bottom, disgusted and uncomprehending, begins to sing. Titania hears his raucous voice — Act III.

"What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?"

The situation is ridiculous to the last degree: only Puck could have caused it; only in this enchanted grove could it have occurred. Bottom is led to the fairy bower, while Puck gleefully tells the confusions of the night to Oberon. Suddenly they hide; Demetrius comes, following Hermia, who spurns him and flounces off. "There's no following her in this fierce mood," says Demetrius, philosophically, and stretches himself out on the turf. Oberon is annoyed at Puck's mistake, which he tries to remedy by charming the sight of the sleeping man. But even Fairies may work amiss and, to the intense delight of Puck, the waking eyes of Demetrius fall first on Helena, who has entered with the detested Lysander. Puck epitomizes the situation which follows:

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!

. . . . . .

Then will two at once woo one
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously."

Preposterously, indeed; for Hermia arrives and the quarrel between the men is soon heightened by the hot words between the maidens. The climax comes when the two males go off to fight it out, while Helena runs away and Hermia wanders forth vaguely in a state of utter bewilderment. Puck is quite in his element; but Oberon is angry and commands him to set these things right. Off flies Puck and carries out his master's commands in his own mischievous way. At last all the Lovers are seen, worn out, asleep in different parts of a misty glade. Then Puck makes sure that all will go well:

"On the ground
Sleep sound
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy."

Act IV.

It is near morning in the forest. Titania is in the midst of her fairy court, her soft arm about the rough shoulders of Bottom. The thing is grotesque; even Oberon pities the infatuated Queen. Bottom rises to no heights of fancy; he feels "marvellous hairy about the face"; he wants two Fairies to scratch him. He calls for food: "I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay,

sweet hay, hath no fellow." Presently he falls asleep: Titania sleeps beside him. It is more than enough for Oberon — besides, he has got what he wanted from Titania. He releases the Fairy Queen:

"Be as thou wert wont to be
See as thou wert wont to see."

The lark begins to sing of sunrise; the Fairies must disappear from the brightening spaces of the wood. Only the four Lovers are left, slumbering on the ground, with Bottom snoring at a distance hid in the bushes. There is a pause.

Hark! Clear and keen through the fresh morning air hunting-horns ring out. Cheerful voices are heard and in strides that good sportsman Theseus with sound everyday talk about hounds and hunting. He sees the sleepers. Again the horns wake the echoes of the forest. The four start to their feet. For them too the magic time is past; they too "see as they were wont to see." All, indeed, is well, and Theseus, in his royal way, proposes a triple wedding. Nothing could be better. So at least the Lovers think as they follow on to Athens and happiness, talking by the way of the strange occurrences of the vanished night — which now, under the rising sun

The awakening.

Seem small and indistinguishable,
Like distant mountains turned into clouds.

Last, we hear the voice of Bottom. He remembers his most miraculous dream and wants to tell all about it. But it is too much for him — "it shall be called Bottom's Dream because it hath no bottom." We are glad to see

him presently bursting in upon the melancholy Players in Athens with his jovial shout: "Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?" There is a tumultuous reunion; the play has been preferred and they tramp away to the palace.

Act V.

Theseus has heard the tale of the Lovers, but he doesn't believe a word of this fairy nonsense, as he scornfully calls it. He classes all lovers (rather ungallantly) with lunatics and poets; you can't trust any of them. And this touch of practical common sense is just what is needed to prepare us for the intense seriousness of the Rustics in their absurd play. And now all the company of Theseus is seated about his great hall. At one end is a stage; at the other a huge fireplace filled with slow-burning and sweet-smelling cedar logs. The friends group themselves around the stage, and Theseus chooses the play of "Pyramus and Thisbe." "It's not good enough," says Philostrate, Master of the Revels, "it will bore you." "Nevertheless," replies Theseus, "I will hear that play.

> For never anything can be amiss,
> When simpleness and duty tender it."

He understands the "cruel pains" that these poor fellows have spent on their pathetic attempt to please him, and he is going to see that their pains are rewarded. So the Players file in, Prologue announces the subject, and the play begins. It is supremely ridiculous; all the faults possible are committed by Bottom and his fellows, amid the amused comment of the spectators. Hippolyta is frankly disgusted: "It is the silliest stuff that ever I heard." But Theseus is bigger-hearted, and rejoins:

"The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

Hippolyta cuts in, rather snappishly:

"It must be your imagination then, not theirs."

And Theseus, smiling:

"If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men."

Well, the play is played out — "a fine tragedy," says the kindly Duke, "and very notably discharged." Then the Bergomask dance is given, and Bottom goes off happy with his friends. Only for a moment the others remain:

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

It is fairy time and bedtime. Quietly they leave the great room; quietly a few servants enter, set chairs and tables in order, and rake together the dying embers on the wide hearth. They go out. Silence. Then — a little merry figure is seen, flitting here and there, very busy in the dim fire-glow. Presently — ever so softly — he begins to sing:

"Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow . . ."

Other little forms come in — through the doors, through the windows — until the whole room (misty now with moonlight) is alive to the whirl of a fairy dance. Oberon

and Titania are there to bless the palace of the good Duke, so that

> the owner of it blest,
> Ever shall in safety rest.

Gradually they fade into the moonlight — they are gone. Puck alone stays — of course he would stay — for one last word with us mortals:

> "If we shadows have offended,
> Think but this, and all is mended:
> That you have but slumbered here,
> While these visions did appear.
> . . . . . .
> So, good night unto you all."

PLAYING "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Few plays of Shakespeare are better suited to the amateur stage than is "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The most elaborate scenery, costuming, and incidental music may be employed; or, on the other hand, only the simplest accessories, if these be all that is available. In either case, the complexity of the situation, the charm of the poetry, and the humor so plentifully interspersed throughout, will provide all the elements for a successful performance. There is no reason why boys and girls who have read the play in class should not act it as a whole, and the following suggestions — based upon a simple theory of stage setting — are offered for the benefit of those who care to do so.

Stage setting. The scenic arrangements present no real difficulties. A stage of workable size may be provided — about twenty-five feet wide by fifteen deep, and raised some three feet from the floor of the hall. If you cannot get the use of a raised stage, do not be discouraged — mark off a section of your hall to represent the stage. It will be noted that Acts I and V take place in the Palace of Theseus, while Acts II, III, and IV are set in "a wood near Athens." The only changes necessary within these settings are the two scenes in Quince's House — I. 2 and IV. 2. A little thought, however, will develop rearrangements of the Palace setting which can be rapidly accomplished by a group of trained scene-shifters — the more readily if it be the aim of the players to *suggest* rather than to give a complete picture. The Palace of Theseus,

for example, may be suggested by heavy draperies in solid colors, with a few good seats of classic design placed about the stage. Any classical dictionary will afford a wealth of material from which ideas may be drawn as to fittings and furniture; the very simplicity of the Grecian architectural theory presents a fine opportunity for experiment. For Quince's House the draperies may be rearranged, through looping back or through the introduction of some pieces of different color. The furniture should be as crude as possible — rough wooden benches and so forth. The fact that Quince himself is a Carpenter makes possible an effective readjustment of the stage to represent a room or workshop in his house.

The forest scenes, in Acts II, III, and IV, present some interesting problems. Is it possible to indicate, with very simple means, the beauty and charm of the wood imagined by Shakespeare? Can we supply a fitting background for the dispute between Oberon and Titania, for the vagaries of Puck, the wanderings of the Lovers? Here again, the amateur company will not try to present complete pictures. It is better to aim at absolute simplicity than to strain after effects which cannot be produced on the amateur stage. Hangings of a soft green will convey the idea of woodland spaces, while some arrangement of living trees and shrubs set about the stage will suggest Titania's bower, the "hawthorne brake" of the Rustics, and the secluded spots for the sleeping Lovers. Care and skill will be required, but the thing can be done — and done effectively — with surprisingly simple materials.

Costume. There are four sets of costumes to be considered. These come into most pleasing contrast at

various stages of the play. We have to dress Theseus and his party, the Fairies, the Rustics, and the Players in the last Act. For the Greek costumes, details of design and color may well be based upon the article "Costume" in the "Encyclopedia Britannica." Cheesecloth, or unbleached cotton, forms a cheap and useful material which drapes well and lends itself to sound decorative color treatment. Theseus and Hippolyta should be differentiated from the others, as befits their rank and, the fact that they are, in a sense, the ruling figures of the play. A little study of color combination and contrast will ensure very pleasing effects.

For the Rustics a rough type of dress is demanded. Upon their first appearance each man may carry some implement of his calling. Clumsy tunics of dull color, some with arms and some without, will serve the purpose; the legs should be either bound with cloth, or bare. In the woodland scene the Rustics must wear hats — for Puck says, in his laughing account to Oberon;

"Briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch."

Old soft felt head-gear will meet all needs.

The Fairies — to be played by small boys and girls — should be dressed as daintily as possible in light gauzy material, with wings attached to the shoulders. Their color and form should contrast definitely, on the one hand with the severe Greek simplicity of the Lovers' costume, and on the other with the rough workaday clothing of the Rustics. Oberon and Titania must look like the King and Queen of the glittering throng. Puck traditionally wears flame color, with a gauze scarf to make him invisible, and

a pair of wings. As many fairies may be used as the stage allows.

The costume of the Players in "Pyramus and Thisbe" is based upon definite stage tradition. Pyramus wears a Greek costume and carries a sword. Thisbe also may use Greek attire; but in one of the best of recent professional performances she wore a dress with a long train. Snug wears a badly-made skin with an amazing lion's head. Wall appears in a long cloak daubed over with splotches of mortar; another method is to provide him with two boards marked out to represent a wall. Moonshine, of course, carries his lantern and bundle of fagots, and a toy dog — though he may lead in a real dog if a sufficiently well-mannered animal can be obtained. Quince, as Prompter, stands at one side with a great roll of manuscript; as Stage Manager also, he is very much concerned as to the care of his various properties.

Acting. The whole success of the play, whether the setting and costume be simple or elaborate, depends upon how it is acted. The first requisite of good acting is clear enunciation. The lines are so beautiful, and the humorous parts so full of fun, that every effort should be made to avoid slovenly phrasing, bad accent, or muffled voice. Herein lies the great problem, and the manner in which this problem is solved spells success or failure. No amount of self-assurance, no degree of histrionic skill will compensate for the careless slurring of words and phrases, or the harsh unmusical tones, which so often mar amateur performances. With this vital point in mind, let us turn for a moment to the acting of the various parts.

Theseus is a gentleman — a soldier — a sportsman and

eminent in each capacity. His personality should reveal all this. He is also a great lord, the ruler of his country, and a man of fine and dignified presence. Hippolyta is beautiful and stately, though perhaps a shade — well, we must remember that Theseus "wooed her with his sword and won her love doing her injuries." It is she who says the one really spiteful thing about the poor hard-working rustic players: "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard!" Egeus is a fussy old man, and somewhat vindictive withal; he wishes his daughter to suffer the extreme penalty of her disobedience. The four Lovers do not call for much comment. They are in turn loving, puzzled, ill-tempered, and supremely happy. Shakespeare makes them rather conventional, and so may we. At the same time, a great deal of amusement can be got out of the parts, especially during the wrangling in Act III.

Oberon and Titania are Fairies of a vigorous type, but Fairies none the less. Into their quarrel should be infused a certain dignity, so as to differentiate it from the somewhat obstreperous dispute of the four Lovers. Oberon's anger must be made to appear a rather dangerous thing. In the Titania-Bottom episode, the beauty and daintiness of the Fairy Queen in word and action is strongly contrasted with the coarse ignorance and vulgarity of the Weaver. Puck is impish, mischievous. He heartily despises all human beings — "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" His impish laugh is heard continually throughout the forest scenes. This part is the most difficult in the play, and the youthful actor selected for it should be chosen because of some real natural aptitude.

Appendix.

The Rustics are of the earth, earthy. They are good fellows and good friends, but stupid and awkward to the last degree. Bottom is easily the leader: a burly man, very self-assertive, with a big voice. The ass's head seems an appropriate adornment; though he makes great play with his long ears, he himself is never really conscious of any change. When he awakes in the forest he is convinced that all has been a dream. He begins to tell all about it with a broad grin. As he closes, however, he puts his hand into his pocket and brings out — a wisp of hay! The grin vanishes, and he hastens from that haunted grove.

In the acting of "Pyramus and Thisbe" there is much traditional by-play. The best arrangement (if it can be managed) shows a platform on the stage for the rustic play. Theseus and his guests are grouped facing the platform, with their backs to the audience. The illusion thus created is valuable, as it takes the audience, as it were, right into the Palace of the Duke. Pyramus is big and burly, Thisbe tall and slender. She, by the way, is hampered with her long train until she solves the difficulty by gathering the whole thing up under her arm and acting through her part in this fashion. Snug (Lion) is very little with a voice that is thin, squeaky, and most unlion-like. Snout (Wall) is much troubled by stuttering. Starveling (Moonshine) is old and deaf; he has difficulty with what he has to say because of the frivolous interruptions of his audience. One or two other bits of traditional stage "business" may be mentioned. When he kills himself, Pyramus first dusts off a place on the stage to die on. Then he stabs himself, but the sword bends

double, being, unfortunately, made of tin. Whereupon Pyramus, with a disgusted look at the audience, straightens it and kills himself again. He falls (very carefully) and Quince, who is divided between his duties as Prompter and his responsibilities as Stage Manager, crawls across the stage with an intent expression, to rescue the damaged sword. Pyramus calls out in his death agony: "Moon, take thy flight!" Moonshine, gaping at the audience, does not hear him. Three times Pyramus repeats the "cue"; then he rises angrily and pushes Moonshine off the stage. Thisbe comes in, utters her lament, and kills herself — with the scabbard, as Quince is still worrying over the bent sword. The whole play is carried out by the Rustics with the most intense seriousness — there is never a smile from first to last. The Bergomask is simply a crude country dance and must not be too long. The tone of the play then changes from the broad farce of the interlude to the quiet, friendly words of Theseus, and the silence before the Fairies come in.

The closing episode calls for soft music, and for one or two songs. But this must be very carefully planned; since unless the songs can be really well sung they are best omitted. For information as to music here, and throughout the play, it would be well to write to Messrs. Novello, London, England. If it is possible to provide a piano, Mendelssohn's incidental music, which was written especially for the play, will add much to the general effect.

All these suggestions, of course, are concerned with the simplest possible concepts. The production may be as elaborate as you please, to a degree limited only by the purse of the company; but it does not by any means

follow that expensive trappings will ensure a good performance. It is not unlikely that the simplest methods are the best, where school performances are concerned. For then the stress falls just where it ought to fall — on the play itself and not on the setting.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

The facts that we know with absolute certainty about William Shakespeare can be given in a few meagre paragraphs. Some bare, prosaic records in Stratford and in the Stationers' Register in London, a few signatures, a will, a deed or two, an application for a coat-of-arms, an occasional mention of his name in court proceedings, in lists of actors, and in the works of fellow authors, — this is about all we have as the basis for a life of one of the greatest men that the world has produced. Traditions and quaint fanciful stories exist, as we might expect, in infinite number and variety. Many of these date back to the poet's own time, and therefore may have in them at least an element of truth. By far the greater number, however, gained popularity nearly a century after his death, when the curiosity of an age intensely interested in the drama began to look back and talk about the most marvellous of all the makers of plays. Few of these later traditions can be relied upon. Yet from the few scrappy facts that we have, supplemented by the earlier legends, and above all by a study of the plays themselves, it is possible to make a story of the poet's life, which, though by no means complete, is full enough to give us a fairly clear understanding of his growth in fame and business prosperity, and his development as a dramatist.

Few facts known about Shakespeare.

It is not strange that we know so little about Shakespeare. His age was not one of biographical writing. To-day a man of not one tenth part of his genius is besought by reporters for interviews concerning his life;

he is persuaded by admiring friends to write his memoirs; as his end approaches, every important newspaper in the land has an article of several columns ready to print the instant that word of his death comes over the wire. Three hundred and fifty years ago nothing of this kind was possible. Newspapers and magazines, genealogies and contemporary history did not exist. Encyclopædias, dictionaries of names, directories, "blue-books," and volumes of "Who's Who" had not been dreamed of. Personal correspondence was meagre, and what few letters were written seldom were preserved. Above all, a taste for reading the lives of men had not been formed. In fact, it was not until fifty years after Shakespeare's time that the art of biographical writing in England was really born. When we remember, in addition to these facts, that actors and playwrights then held a distinctly inferior position in society, and by the growing body of Puritans were looked upon with contempt and extreme disfavor, it is not surprising that no special heed was paid to the life of Shakespeare. On the contrary, it is astonishing that we know as much as we do about him, — fully as much as we know about most of the writers of his time, and even of many who lived much later.

Why we know so little about Shakespeare.

In the records of the 16th century there are numerous references to Shakespeares living in the midland counties of England, especially in Warwickshire. For the most part, they seem to have been substantial yeomen and plain farmers of sound practical sense rather than men of learning or culture. Some of them owned land and prospered. Such a one was John Shakespeare, who moved to Strat-

The poet's father, John Shakespeare.

ford-on-Avon about 1550 and became a dealer in malt and corn, meat, wool, and leather. He is referred to sometimes as a glover and a butcher. Probably he was both, and dealt besides in all the staples that farmers about the village produced and brought to market to sell. The fact that he could not write, which was nothing unusual among men of his station in the 16th century, did not prevent his prospering in business. For more than twenty years after the earliest mention of his name in the Stratford records, he is spoken of frequently and always in a way to show us that his financial standing in the community was steadily increasing. He seems also to have been a man of affairs. From one office to another he rose until in 1568 he held the position of High Bailiff, or Mayor of Stratford. Eleven years earlier his fortunes had been increased by his marriage to Mary Arden, the daughter of a prosperous farmer of the neighboring village of Wilmcote, who bequeathed to his daughter a house, with fifty acres of land, and a considerable sum of money. It is not fair, therefore, to speak of the father of William Shakespeare, as some have done, as "an uneducated peasant," or as "a provincial shopkeeper." At the time of the birth of his illustrious son he was one of the most prominent men in Stratford, decidedly well-to-do, respected and trusted by all.

The year before John Shakespeare brought his bride from Wilmcote to Stratford-on-Avon, he had purchased a house in Henley Street, and there he and his wife were living when their children were born. It was a cottage two stories high, with dormer windows, and of timber and plaster construction. Though frequently repaired and built over during the three hundred and fifty years that

The house in which Shakespeare was born.

have passed, it still remains in general appearance much the same as it looked in 1556. Simple, crude, plain, — it is nevertheless the most famous house in England, if not in the world. Noted men and women from all parts of the earth have visited Stratford to see it. Essays, stories, and poems have been written about it. Preserved in the care of the Memorial Society, it is the shrine of the literary pilgrim and the Mecca of tourists who flock during the summer to the quaint old village on the Avon. For here, in a small bare room on the second floor, William Shakespeare was born.

How little we know of Shakespeare, compared with even a minor poet of the 19th century, is shown by the fact that we are not certain of the exact date on which the greatest of all poets was born. The records of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford show that the child was baptized on April 26, 1564, and since it was the custom at that time for the baptism of children to take place on the third day after birth, it has been generally agreed that William was born on April 23, and that date is celebrated as his birthday. Tradition tells us, and probably truthfully, that it was also on this date, April 23, in 1616, that he died.

Date of the poet's birth, April 23, 1564.

Of the poet's boyhood we know next to nothing. It is a mistake, however, to assume that he lacked educational opportunities. There was in Stratford an excellent free Grammar School such as a bailiff's son would attend, and to which it is reasonable to suppose that the boy was sent. Here he studied chiefly Latin, for education then in England consisted almost entirely of the classics, especially Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and the comedies

Shakespeare's boyhood and schooling, 1571–1577.

SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON

THE ROOM WHERE SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN

of Plautus and Terence. The comment of Ben Jonson, his fellow dramatist of later years, that Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek," should not be taken too literally. Compared with the profound scholarship of a college-trained man like Jonson, the Stratford boy had, to be sure, but little knowledge of the classics. Yet there is every evidence to show that he understood both Latin and French pretty well, and that he knew the Bible thoroughly. It is clear, too, that by nature he was a boy of remarkable powers of observation and keenly retentive memory, who used every opportunity about him for acquiring information and ideas. Whether he went to school or not would have made but little difference to one whose mind possessed rare powers of developing and training itself. Like Burns and Lincoln, he was educated more by people and the world of Nature about him than by books and formal teaching.

Five years in Stratford after leaving school, 1577-1582.

Ordinarily a boy of the 16th century would remain at the Grammar School from seven to fourteen, but there is a well-founded tradition that Shakespeare left in 1577, when he was thirteen years old, and never attended school again. About this time the records show that his father's financial difficulties began. Another pair of hands was needed at home to help in the support of the family, and William was the oldest son. Just how he was occupied, however, between his fourteenth and eighteenth years we cannot say. Probably he assisted his father in his declining business. One of the bits of Stratford gossip, collected by the antiquarian Aubrey, states that he was "in his younger years a school-master in the country," and another tells us that "when he was a boy he exercised his father's

trade. When he killed a calf, he would doe it in a high style and make a speech." It may be, as another reference seems to imply, that he was employed in the office of a lawyer. But we must not put too much confidence in these traditions, which, like all stories passed on by word of mouth, grew and changed as the years went by. As much as we should like to know of his employment, his reading, and all the circumstances that were developing his mind and character during these five important years, we must remember that "there is no reason why anything should have been recorded; he was an obscure boy living in an inland village, before the age of newspapers, and out of relation with people of fashion and culture. During this period as little is known of him as is known of Cromwell during the same period; as little, but no less. This fact gives no occasion either for surprise or scepticism as to his marvellous genius; it was an entirely normal fact concerning boys growing up in unliterary times and in rural communities."[1]

His marriage to Anne Hathaway, 1582.

The first really authentic record we have of Shakespeare after his school days is that of the baptism of his daughter Susanna, on May 26, 1583. The previous year, when only eighteen, he had married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer in the neighboring village of Shottery. This picturesque hamlet was reached then from Stratford, as it is today, by a delightful foot-path through the wide and fertile fields of Warwickshire. Perhaps no other spot connected with the poet's life, except the house in which he was born, is dearer to people's hearts than the quaint old thatched-

[1] H. W. Mabie: "William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man," page 51.

ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE AT SHOTTERY

INTERIOR OF ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE

roof building known as "Anne Hathaway's cottage"; for it still stands, at least in part, as it was when the "youthful lover went courting through the meadows, past the 'bank where the wild thyme blows,' to Shottery." Two years after the birth of Susanna, in February, 1585, twins were born, and soon after the youthful husband and father left his native town to seek his fortunes in London.

It would be most interesting to know when and how and just why Shakespeare left Stratford, but no documents have been found that throw any certain light upon this portion of his life. It has generally been assumed that he found his way to the metropolis soon after the birth of his twins. Probably he walked by the highway through Oxford and Wycombe, or if he rode it was on horseback, purchasing a saddle-horse at the beginning of his journey, as was the custom then, and selling it upon his arrival in the city. There is an old tradition that, with other young men of the village, he had been involved in a poaching escapade upon the estate of Sir Thomas Lucy. In the first regular biography of Shakespeare written by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, nearly a hundred years after the poet's death, the story of this adventure is given as an actual fact. "He had, by a misfortune common enough among young fellows, fallen into ill company, and among them some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him, and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost,

Reasons for leaving Stratford: the poaching tradition.

yet it is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London." No trace of this ballad has been found; indeed, the whole story rests on gossip, and must not be taken too literally. It is supported, in a way, by the fact that Justice Shallow in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is unquestionably a humorous sketch, or caricature, of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote Hall, thus suggesting that whether he had been prosecuted and harried out of town by his wealthy neighbor or not, the youthful poet had some personal reasons for ridiculing the head of the Lucy family.

Stratford too narrow a field for Shakespeare.

Still another account explains Shakespeare's departure from Stratford by stating that he joined a company of strolling players. Though this may possibly have been the means of his finding congenial travelling companions, it seems more natural to suppose that he left his native village much as a boy to-day leaves a remote country town and goes to the city to seek his fortune. His father's affairs, we know, had been steadily declining; his own family was growing; business in many trades through the midland counties was poor; any ambitious and high-spirited youth would have become restless and discontented. What was more natural, under these circumstances, than the breaking of home-ties and moving to London for its larger opportunities?

The traditions that Shakespeare, upon his arrival in the capital about 1587, was employed in a printer's shop and a lawyer's office, are extremely doubtful. It seems much more likely that he became connected with the

theatre at once, either as a call-boy in the building itself, or as one of those who held the horses on which gallants of the city rode to the play-house. That he should have turned to the theatre rather than to business to get a foothold in London is not strange. Companies of players had frequently visited Stratford in his boyhood. Indeed, the people of his native town seem to have been exceptionally fond of the drama, a fact, as Mr. Mabie has pointed out, "of very obvious bearing on the education of Shakespeare's imagination and the bent of his mind toward a vocation." As a lad of eleven he probably saw the pageant at Kenilworth Castle, in honor of Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Earl of Leicester. The processions and gorgeous costumes of this occasion, the tableaux and scenes set forth by the actors from the city must have made a profound impression on the mind of the imaginative boy. Moreover, it was a time of widespread interest in everything dramatic. When Shakespeare was born in 1564, there was not a single building in London devoted to the presentation of plays. At the time of his death, fifty-two years later, there were at least nine. The development of the drama from simple morality plays and historical pageants given in tavern-yards and on village greens, to "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet," covered the period of the poet's youth; so that when he arrived in London, more than ever before or since in English history, the theatre was of compelling interest and attraction.

Shakespeare's first connection with the London theatres.

The six years after his arrival in London are a blank. We must imagine him rapidly rising through various positions at the Rose or the Curtain, for a young man of his genius and enterprise would not long remain obscure.

It is certain that he became an actor before he wrote for the stage. By 1592, however, he had evidently earned sufficient fame as a playwright to stir the jealousy of Robert Greene, a rival author, who in that year refers bitterly to him as "in his owne conceit the only *Shakes-scene* in a countrie," and then parodies a line from an early play that is attributed to Shakespeare. While as an actor he was learning stagecraft in the best possible school, he was undoubtedly trying his prentice hand by mending old plays and contributing bits to the work of his older companions. These earliest dramatic writings may have been numerous, but they are either entirely lost or hidden in plays credited to other men. His progress from a clerk in a country store to a writer of drama is thus admirably described by Sidney Lee: "A young man of two-and-twenty, burdened with a wife and children, he had left his home in the little country town of Stratford-on-Avon in 1586 to seek his fortune in London. Without friends, without money, he had, like any other stage-struck youth, set his heart on becoming an actor in the metropolis. Fortune favoured him. He sought and won the humble office of call-boy in a London playhouse; but no sooner had his foot touched the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder than his genius taught him that the topmost rung was within his reach. He tried his hand on the revision of an old play, and the manager was not slow to recognize an unmatched gift for dramatic writing.[1]

His earliest work as actor and playwright.

It was not until 1593, when Shakespeare was twenty-nine, that he appeared openly in the field of authorship. On April 18 of that year his long poem "Venus and

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer," page 32.

Adonis" was entered at Stationers' Hall for publication. It was printed by Richard Field, a Stratford man who had come to London somewhat earlier than the poet, and though published without a name on the title-page, the dedication to the Earl of Southampton was signed "William Shakespeare." The same is true of "Lucrece," which was registered in May of 1594. These two long poems must have had wide popularity, for they are often praised by critics of the day, and in the poet's own lifetime several editions of both were issued. They were the means by which Shakespeare became known as an author, for though some of his dramatic work may have been printed before this, plays were not regarded then as literature to be read, whereas these poems were issued under the poet's supervision for the reading public, and were thus "the first fruits of his conscious artistic life."

The first books published under his name.

Both as actor and playwright, Shakespeare's fame rapidly increased after 1594; in fact, the eight years that followed saw him rise to the height of his powers. His name stands first on the list of "principal Comedians" who acted Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour" in 1598. Francis Meres in his "Palladis Tamia," published in the same year, speaks of the "mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare," and then proceeds to name twelve of his plays and compare him favorably with the Roman dramatists Seneca and Plautus. Even if this list is incomplete we see that already before 1598 he had written three of his most charming comedies, one of them "The Merchant of Venice," and at least one of the tragedies that ranks among his very greatest. From then until his retirement

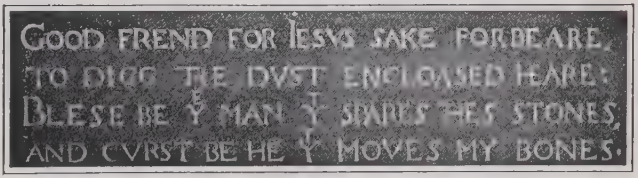
Progress in fame and fortune.

to Stratford fourteen years later, there are frequent references to his plays which appeared with astonishing rapidity. The dates when they were written and first acted are often uncertain, but before 1612 he had produced more than twenty dramas which together constitute the most marvelous body of literary work that ever came from a human mind.

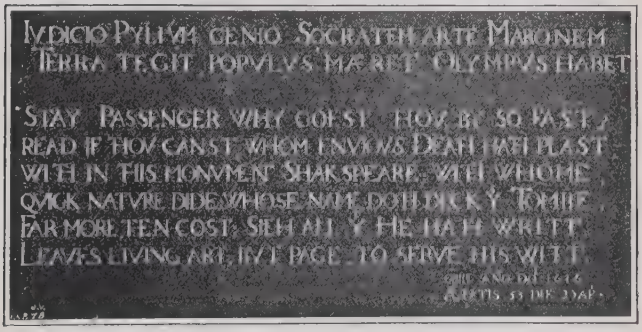
As an actor he did not continue to excel. If we may trust the sentiments of the sonnets, it is clear that he thoroughly disliked this part of his profession. Probably after 1604 he ceased to appear on the stage altogether. Financially it is certain that he was prosperous. We know, for one thing, that he owned shares in several London theatres, notably the Globe, where many of his own plays were first presented to enthusiastic London audiences. Then his successful application to the College of Heralds in 1599, on behalf of his father, for a grant of coat-of-arms; his purchase of several pieces of property in his native town; the records of lawsuits to recover debts which were owed him; numerous references which show us that he was looked upon as a man of means and standing; his friendship with Ben Jonson and other learned men of his day, — these facts, with the traditions of later generations, all convince us that the author of "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" was a successful man of affairs, as well as one of the most prominent and best-loved dramatists of his time.

Although Shakespeare made London his home after 1584 or 1585, it is probable that he often visited Stratford where his family continued to reside. An old legend states that he frequently put up at the Crown Inn in Oxford on his way to and fro. Documents exist, moreover, which

Holy Trinity Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon


GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLESE BE Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES,
AND CVRST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.

Inscription on Shakespeare's Tomb


IVDICIO PYLIVM GENIO SOCRATEM ARTE MARONEM
TERRA TEGIT POPVLVS MAERET OLYMPVS HABET
STAY PASSENGER WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST,
READ IF THOV CANST WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITH IN THIS MONVMENT SHAKSPEARE: WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK Y TOMBE
FAR MORE THEN COST: SIEH ALL Y HE HATH WRITT
LEAVES LIVING ART, BVT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WITT.
AETATIS 53 DIE 23 AP.

Inscription on Shakespeare's Monument. Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon

show that he was constantly investing money in real estate in his native village, to which he seems to have looked forward as a pleasant retreat after the strenuous days of actor, theatre-manager, and playwright were over. Probably the breaking off of London ties was gradual; but it is doubtful whether he was much in the city after 1612, the year in which "Henry VIII," the last of his plays, was written. He now appears in the records as "William Shakespeare, Gent., of Stratford-on-Avon"; and there he lived with his well-won honors, respected and loved, for four years.

Retirement from London, 1612.

In the early spring of 1616, Shakespeare's youngest daughter, Judith, was married. A month later he made his will, and on April 25 the register of Christ Church in Stratford shows that he was buried. According to the lettering on the monument he died on April 23, and that date, the date of his birth fifty-two years before, has been generally accepted as the day of his death. He was buried in the chancel of the fine old church, not far from the spot where he had been christened, and over the place where he lies may still be seen the quaint lines which tradition tells us he himself wrote to be inscribed above him:—

Death in Stratford, April 23, 1616.

> Good Frend for Iesus Sake Forbeare,
> To Digg the Dust Encloased Heare:
> Blest be Ye Man Yt Spares thes Stones,
> And Curst be he Yt Moves My Bones.

Whether the poet wrote these threatening words or not, no sexton has disturbed his remains, and the grave of William Shakespeare in the beautiful church by the river he loved has remained unopened.

Difficulties of determining the dates of the plays.

One of the problems of Shakespearean scholars for more than a century has been to determine the exact years in which the various plays were written. For just as we have no details of the poet's life, so are the records of his work either extremely meagre or entirely lacking. Not a single manuscript of anything that Shakespeare wrote has been preserved. The fire which burned the Globe theatre to the ground in 1613 may have destroyed the original pages of all the dramas: and yet, interesting and precious as they would be to us to-day, it is doubtful whether we can attribute to their loss our lack of knowledge as to just when each was written. We must remember that in Elizabethan times plays were not considered literature to be read. After they had served their purpose on the stage and passed out of popular favor, they were set aside and wholly neglected. As long as there was the slightest chance of their being in demand at the theatre, the author and companies of actors did their best to keep them out of print altogether, apparently in the belief that attendance at the playhouse would suffer if the drama in book form was in the hands of the people. Moreover, among the most cultivated men of the day, and especially among the growing body of Puritans, there was a strong prejudice against the whole theatrical business. By them, actors were held in low esteem, and plays were looked upon as things of light, or even questionable, character. The modern conception that regards the drama as a high and artistic form of literature had not been born.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that during his own lifetime only sixteen of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays appeared in print. These editions, which are known to-day as the Quartos, were small, cheaply-made, paper-bound pamphlets usually sold for a sixpence each. It is generally believed that they were issued without the poet's consent, and probably even against his wishes. Several of them were undoubtedly printed from shorthand notes taken slyly at a performance in the theatre. Others may have been set up from the soiled and tattered copies of a needy actor who had been secretly bribed to part with them. The confusion and strange blunders in the text show us that these Quartos were the careless and hasty work of piratical printers; indeed, it is almost certain that Shakespeare himself did not revise or in any way prepare a single one of them for the press.

The Quarto editions of the plays.

Inexact and inadequate as are the pirated Quarto editions, they would probably be the only plays of Shakespeare known to us to-day had it not been for a remarkable book that appeared seven years after his death. In 1623 two of the poet's friends put forth in a single volume his complete dramatic works. These men, John Heminge and Henry Condell, — names which are forever linked with Shakespeare's, — were actors in the same company with him, and, with Burbage, were joint owners of the Globe Theatre. The great dramatist, as a token of lifelong friendship, in his will bequeathed to them and to Burbage the sum of twenty-six shillings and eight pence to buy rings; and they in turn collected and edited his plays "to keepe the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow

The First Folio edition of the plays.

alive." It is a large volume of 901 pages in two columns of fine print, and on the title-page, besides a crude engraving of the poet, are these words:

Mr. William
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES

Published according to the True Original Copies.

LONDON
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

This is perhaps the most important volume in the whole range of English literature, for in it appeared for the first time in print twenty of Shakespeare's plays, among them "The Tempest," "Twelfth Night," "Julius Caesar," "Macbeth," "Cymbeline," and others of the dramatist's masterpieces. Heminge and Condell had access to stage copies of these plays which in another generation might have been lost or destroyed by fire; so that their work, coming when it did, saved for us a large portion of the finest poetry and deepest wisdom of Shakespeare's mind. It is no wonder that the 156 extant copies of this notable book are preserved as priceless treasures; for no other single volume ever did a greater service to literature than this Folio of 1623.

Although Heminge and Condell must have known in many cases the exact years in which Shakespeare was at work upon his various plays, they did not consider such

information of sufficient interest to include it in their edition. Well might we spare some of the tiresome eulogies, which they printed in their preface, for a page or two of facts that they so easily might have included. As it stands, however, the First Folio helps but little in arranging the chronology of the comedies and tragedies. And yet, in spite of all difficulties, by painstaking research scholars have come to a pretty general agreement upon the dates of composition of most of the plays. The evidence which they have used may be divided into two kinds, external and internal, — that is, evidence found outside of the plays, and evidence found within the works themselves. External evidence consists of such information as has been obtained from records of performances in diaries and letters; quotations and allusions in other books; entries in the register of the Stationers' Company, which for nearly three hundred years regulated the publication of all books in England; records of the Master of Revels at Court, and of course the dates on the title-pages of the Quartos themselves. A good illustration of this sort of evidence is the journal of a certain Dr. Simon Forman, in which he mentions the fact that in 1610 and 1611 he witnessed performances of "Macbeth," "Cymbeline," and "The Winter's Tale" at the Globe. Another is the celebrated passage in the "Palladis Tamia," or "Wit's Treasury," of Francis Meres, which was published in 1598: "As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so *Shakespeare* among y^e^ English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witness his *Gētlemē of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love*

Dates of composition: external evidence.

labours wonne, his *Midsummers night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice:* for Tragedy, his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo* and *Iuliet*." Such references as these give a definite year, later than which the plays referred to could not have been written. With a starting point thus settled, it is often possible to work backward and fix definitely the date of composition.

Dates of composition: internal evidence.

Internal evidence, though seldom as exact as external, and therefore more difficult to interpret, is much more abundant. It may be nothing more than a reference in the mouth of an actor to events or books the dates of which are known, such as the words in the Prologue to "Henry V" that refer to the expedition of the Earl of Essex to Ireland in 1599. More often it deals with considerations of the metre, language, and form of the work itself. By studying such matters as classical allusions, the use of Latin words, kinds of figures of speech, puns, variations of verse and prose, and many other changing peculiarities of the poet's method, scholars have been able to trace the development of Shakespeare as a writer, and thus assign many of his plays to their probable year on no other evidence than their style. For instance, the date of "Julius Caesar" is generally agreed to be not earlier than 1601 from the poet's use of the word "eternal" in the phrase "the eternal devil." As late as 1600 Shakespeare was using "infernal" in such expressions, but after that year he began to use "eternal," owing probably to the increasing objection among Puritans of London to the use of profanity on the stage. Even such a simple matter as the number of rhyming lines in a play may help to

place it approximately. In "Love's Labour's Lost," the earliest of the comedies, there are 1028 rhymes; whereas in "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," written twenty years later, there are none and two respectively. It is therefore safe to assume that as Shakespeare's style developed he used rhyme less and less, so that tragedies with but few rhyming lines, such as "Antony and Cleopatra" and "Coriolanus," may be assigned, if on no other ground, to the later years of his life. Such matters of structure and style are by no means always certain. They are delicate to handle and require sound judgment and long experience. Yet it is by this sort of internal evidence, rather than by external facts, that the chronology of the plays has been determined.

The following table gives the result of research and comparison, of proof and conjecture, on the part of Shakespearean scholars. There still remain, of course, many differences of opinion; some of the dates are less certain than others; a few are almost entirely the result of guesswork. Yet when we consider the meagre data upon which students have built their conclusions, their lack of agreement seems remarkably slight and insignificant.

Probable dates of the plays.

Of the thirty-seven plays in the following table, the sixteen which appeared in Quarto editions during the poet's life were "Titus Andronicus," 1594; "Richard II," "Richard III," and "Romeo and Juliet," 1597; "1 Henry IV" and "Love's Labour's Lost," 1598; "The Merchant of Venice," "Henry V," "Much Ado About Nothing," "2 Henry IV," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," 1600; "The Merry Wives of Windsor," 1602; "Hamlet,"

Plays printed before 1623.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS AND POEMS

Period	Year	Poems	Comedies	Histories	Tragedies
I	1590		Love's Labour's Lost	1 Henry VI	
	1591		Comedy of Errors	2 Henry VI; 3 Henry VI	
	1592		Two Gentlemen of Verona	Richard III	Romeo and Juliet
	1593	Venus and Adonis		King John	Titus Andronicus
II	1594	Lucrece	A Midsummer Night's Dream		
	1595		Taming of the Shrew	Richard II	
	1596		Merchant of Venice		
	1597		Merry Wives of Windsor	1 Henry IV	
	1598		Much Ado About Nothing	2 Henry IV	
	1599	Passionate Pilgrim?	As You Like It	Henry V	
	1600		Twelfth Night		

	1601	Phoenix and the Turtle?	Troilus and Cressida		Julius Caesar
	1602		All's Well that Ends Well		Hamlet
	1603		Measure for Measure		
	1604				Othello
III	1605				King Lear
	1606				Macbeth
	1607				Timon of Athens
	1608	A Lover's Complaint	Pericles		Antony and Cleopatra
	1609	Sonnets (Printed)			Coriolanus
	1610		Cymbeline		
IV	1611		Winter's Tale; Tempest		
	1612			Henry VIII	

1603; "King Lear," 1608; "Troilus and Cressida," and "Pericles," 1609. In addition to these, a Quarto of "Othello" was printed in 1622. The other twenty plays were not published, so far as we know, until 1623, when Heminge and Condell included them in the First Folio.

Periods of Shakespeare's development.

The periods shown in the table are, of course, wholly artificial. Shakespeare himself had no such division of his works in mind, and it is dangerous for us to-day to press very far the suggestion of clearly defined compartments for the plays. The development of the dramatist, like that of any artist, was gradual. Changes in style, in method, in views of life took place not in a single year, but were the result of slowly expanding power and growth of character. In that growth there were no sudden breaks or unaccountable transformations. The mind that created "Hamlet" in 1602 was the same mind that created "Twelfth Night" in 1600, no matter how black the line that separates them into two different periods. Yet a glance at the divisions in the table reveals two or three interesting facts.

The years of experiment, 1590–1593.

When Shakespeare has gained a foothold in the London theatres he first turns his hand to old plays, touching them up, remodelling, and improving. This is his natural work as an apprentice playwright. As he gains confidence and strikes out for himself, he experiments with all the forms of playwriting that then are known. Thus in "Love's Labour's Lost" we find one of the very few works the plot of which is his own invention; in "The Comedy of Errors" and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" he imitates the Latin comedies of Plautus; in "Richard III" and "King John"

he attempts historical tragedy, and in "Romeo and Juliet" he gives us tragedy, full of romance and passion, drawn from Italy whence so many of his stories of later years are to come. The four years from 1590 to 1593 are evidently years of feeling about, testing himself, and experimenting. Naturally he writes with great rapidity: he is full of enthusiasm and the impetuous rush of youth. All that he does shows signs of a beginner and an unsettled purpose. We therefore do not expect to find highly finished work. As a matter of fact, with the exception of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Richard III," none of the plays of this early period are acted on the stage to-day or often read.

The poems.

It is now that Shakespeare writes his two long story poems, — "Venus and Adonis" in 1593 and "Lucrece" in 1594. In them he retells classical legends taken chiefly from the Roman poet Ovid. Their elaborate and florid language reminds us of similar narrative poems of the period. In their spirit and style they resemble the early plays, but in one important respect they differ: they are published with their author's name on the title-page. Unlike the Quartos of the dramas, Shakespeare prepares these poems for the press. Their popularity surpasses even that of the comedies. Seven editions of "Venus and Adonis" are issued between 1593 and 1602, and five of "Lucrece" between 1594 and 1616. Among the reading public of his day he becomes more widely known by them than by his work for the stage. He is now, in the eyes of the learned world, an author and creator of real literature.

By 1594 the years of apprenticeship are over; Shakespeare has found where his powers lie. He is still young

and ardent; the sadder and more serious things of life have not yet come to him; he sympathizes with the demands of the London populace to be amused. The results are the last of the histories and seven years of comedies, — the fullest, and we may well believe, the happiest time of his life as a dramatist. His power of expression, his skill in constructing a play, — above all, his keen insight into human nature, — develop with astonishing rapidity, until he is the favorite playwright of his day. In wit and enthusiasm, in pure poetry and "gusto," in creation of interesting and delightful character, the plays from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to "Twelfth Night" stand unmatched. Not one of them has faded after three hundred years: they still are acted and read with profit and pleasure. Together they form "the rich period of unsurpassable comedy."

The great comedies, 1594–1600.

But youth and rollicking fun, high spirits and unbroken happiness, do not last. With the end of the century comes a turning-point in Shakespeare's life. Perhaps it is personal grief and suffering; possibly it is poor health and for the first time the thought that his own death may not be far away; possibly it is disappointment in his friends or his ambitions; or it may be simply a deeper wisdom coming with maturer years that now begins to make him think more and more of the greater and more serious things of life. The passions, the temptations, the moral struggles of mankind now absorb his interest. Naturally, comedy and history are inadequate for the expression of these deeper thoughts and emotions. With "Julius Caesar" begin the great tragedies, that "series of spectacles of the pity and terror

The great tragedies, 1601–1609.

of human suffering and human sin without parallel in the modern world."[1] Even the three comedies of these years are comedies only in name. Throughout them there is the atmosphere of suffering and sin. Their theme and spirit are more in keeping with "Hamlet" and "King Lear" than with the merrymaking and joyous fun of "As You Like It" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Thus every play of this period has a tragic motive, for during its nine years the mind and heart of the poet are concerned with the saddest and deepest things of human life.

The sonnets.

In 1609, toward the close of this period of tragedy, Shakespeare prints his volume of sonnets, one hundred and fifty-four in number. Some of them must have been written much earlier. Their style and youthful spirit show that; but besides, as early as 1598, Francis Meres spoke of Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets among his private friends." Yet many of them show such power, such masterful handling of profound thought, such noble poetic form, that they seem to come from the years that produced "Hamlet" and "Othello." Probably the poet has been writing them off and on ever since he came to London, and now in 1609 he puts them at last into book form. It is well that he does so; for to-day every one who enjoys poetry reads them with delight. Unlike "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" they do not fade; they are among the most perfect sonnets in our language, and they contain some of the finest lines that ever came from Shakespeare's pen. Here are two of the most admired:

[1] "The Facts about Shakespeare," Neilson and Thorndike. The Macmillan Company, 1915.

29.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

116.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken;
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

The storm and stress of tragedy, however, does not continue to the end. In the last years Shakespeare turns

away from the bitterness and sorrow of life, and leaves us as his final message three romantic comedies of delightful charm. The calm and quiet humor of these plays is very different from the boisterous farce of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and the buffoonery of the clowns in the earlier dramas; but their beauty and sweetness and idealism make a happy and fitting close to the poet's work. In "Henry VIII," which shows brilliant flashes of his genius, and in "The Two Noble Kinsmen," which is not generally included among his plays, he writes in collaboration with John Fletcher, or with some other of the younger dramatists of these later years. He has made his fortune; he knows that his work is done; he is looking fondly toward his Stratford home, and so he turns over his place to other men.

The later comedies, 1610–1612.

First, — imitating, feeling his way, experimenting, rapidly and eagerly trying everything about him; then seven full years of whole-souled joy of living, enthusiasm, laughter, and fun; then deeper emotions and profound thought upon the saddest and most serious things of life; then a happier time of calm reflection and repose, followed by retirement from active work in London to the peaceful village home on the Avon; then, after four quiet years, the end. Thus, in a way, we begin to understand the development of Shakespeare's mind and character by a study of the years in which he wrote his plays and poems.

Summary.

SHAKESPEARE'S POPULARITY IN HIS OWN DAY

There somehow exists a quite general feeling that Shakespeare's genius was not properly appreciated in his own time; that dramatists, now ranked far below him, were more popular with audiences in the days of Queen Elizabeth and King James I. Whether this notion comes from the scarcity of facts which we have concerning the poet's life, it is hard to say. Certainly such a belief must be ranked among the most unfortunate of popular errors. There is ample evidence to show that he was not only popular with uneducated London tradesmen and apprentices who thronged the pit of the Globe, but in the best critical judgment of the day he was considered the first of poets and dramatists. "Throughout his lifetime," says Sidney Lee, "and for a generation afterwards, his plays drew crowds to pit, boxes, and gallery alike. It is true that he was one of a number of popular dramatists, many of whom had rare gifts, and all of whom glowed with a spark of genuine literary fire. But Shakespeare was the sun in the firmament: when his light shone, the fires of all contemporaries paled in the playgoer's eye."[1]

Shakespeare widely appreciated in his own lifetime.

Many bits of evidence have come down to us that show how high a place in people's hearts the plays of Shakespeare held in their author's lifetime. For instance, when he had been in London but ten years he was summoned by Queen Elizabeth to play before her and the court at Greenwich in the

Evidences of his popularity.

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer."

Christmas holidays. The favor which King James showed his tragedies is well known. "Hamlet" was acted several times in the first year of its production, both in London and at Oxford and Cambridge. Four editions were printed in eight years, — an unusual demand for those times. Moreover, the name of Shakespeare appears in the works of contemporary authors more than that of any other dramatist, and almost invariably it is coupled with praise and admiration. He is the "mellifluous" and "honey-tongued" poet. One sets him above Plautus and Seneca; another prefers him to Chaucer, Gower, and Spenser; another declares that "he puts them all down, ay, and Ben Jonson, too." In the preface of the first complete edition of his plays, published seven years after his death, the compilers, who were his fellow-actors and friends, wrote of him that he was one "who as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough both to draw and hold you; for his wit can no more lie hid than it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe and againe; and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him."

Ben Jonson's praise of Shakespeare.

A part of the introductory material of this First Folio edition of the plays consists of poems of praise contributed by the poet's admirers. Among the most famous are the noble lines

of Ben Jonson, scholar, poet, and dramatist. Here are the words of a thoughtful critic who knew the theatre from the stage and from the audience, — a man who had been associated with Shakespeare throughout his London career and who understood, better than any other, his place in the hearts of English people.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.

* * * * * * * *

Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My SHAKESPEARE, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further to make thee a room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so my brain excuses, —
I mean with great, but disproportioned Muses;
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek
From thence to honour thee I would not seek

For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage; or when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for a comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil, turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurel he may gain to scorn;
For a good poet's made, as well as born.

And such wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well turnèd and true filèd lines,
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanced, and made a constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage
Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,
And despairs day but for thy volume's light.

Even without these lines and numerous other bits of unqualified praise from contemporary pens, the fact that the plays were financially successful, and that from them their author made for those times a small fortune, shows us that Shakespeare was truly appreciated by all sorts of people in his own day. Before his death he had taken the place which he now holds, — that of the foremost of English poets and dramatists.

SHAKESPEARE'S FAME SINCE HIS DEATH

During the three hundred years since Shakespeare's death the popularity of his plays on the stage has naturally varied somewhat with the changing taste of the times. Toward the end of his life a decline in the drama had begun, so that the generation which followed was more pleased by the coarse blood-and-thunder tragedies of Webster, Ford, and Massinger than by the more profound and more artistic work of Shakespeare. Certain ones of the plays that very early ceased to be popular on the stage have never since come into favor. Most of the histories, two or three of the earliest comedies, "All's Well That Ends Well," "Measure for Measure," "Pericles," "Timon of Athens," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Coriolanus" have seldom been acted since they were first produced. The subjects of some of these are not suitable to present in a modern theatre; in others, as in the histories, there is not enough action or dialogue to satisfy an audience to-day. Yet these make but a small portion of the poet's work. With the exception of the twenty years, 1640–1660, when all theatres in England were closed under the censorship of Cromwell's Puritan Government, there never has been an age that has not had the opportunity to see its foremost actors in the greater comedies and tragedies that came from Shakespeare's pen.

Shakespeare on the stage since 1616.

During the reign of Charles II, in the period known as the Restoration, and for the forty years that followed, literary taste was at its lowest mark. Naturally Shakespeare suffered at a time when the coarse and artificial

plays of Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar fascinated both the nobility and the common people of London. His dramas, to be sure, were still presented on the stage, but they were generally worked over, or even rewritten, to suit the strange fancies of the age. With music, new scenes, and new characters they were mutilated almost beyond recognition. From one point of view they were spoiled; yet it is significant that even to the theatre-goers of 1680 they still had enough vitality and imaginative power to be made the foundation of popular and successful entertainments. Dryden, the chief poet of the time, admired the genius of their author, and wrote prefaces for them in their renovated form. Betterton, the greatest actor of the age, was regarded at his best as the Prince in "Hamlet," a part which he played on many occasions, and always to enthusiastic houses. Samuel Pepys, who kept a remarkable diary between 1661 and 1669, records in his journal three hundred and fifty-one visits to the London theatres during these eight years. On forty-one of these occasions he saw plays by Shakespeare, or plays based upon them. Though Pepys was entirely unable to appreciate the poetry and all the finer qualities of what he heard, — he speaks in especially slighting terms of the comedies, — still it is interesting to know that he had even the opportunity, in eight short years, to witness fourteen different works of the great Elizabethan dramatist. This, too, in England's darkest age of literary appreciation!

The feeling for Shakespeare during the Restoration, 1660–1740.

The middle of the eighteenth century saw a new and genuine enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Scholars began to study his life and his work. New editions were published,

with notes and comment. The plays were revived on the stage in their original and true form. A great interest in all that he had said and thought was born, — an interest which grew through the years that followed, and still is growing. The foremost actors of all times have turned to him for their most ambitious work, and the crowning of their professional achievement. Perhaps the greatest of them all was David Garrick. "From his first triumph in Richard III, in 1741, to his farewell performance of Lear in 1776, he won a series of signal successes in both tragedy and comedy, in Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Richard III, Falconbridge, Romeo, Hotspur, Iago, Leontes, Posthumus, Benedick, and Antony. Garrick's services to Shakespeare extended beyond the parts which he impersonated. He revived many plays, and though he garbled the texts freely, yet in comparison with earlier practice he really had some right to boast that he had restored the text of Shakespeare to the stage. Further, his example led to an increased popularity of Shakespeare in the theatre and afforded new incentives for other actors. Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard were among the women who acted with Garrick. Macklin, by his revival of Shylock as a tragic character, Henderson, by his impersonation of Falstaff, and John Palmer in secondary characters, as Iago, Mercutio, Touchstone, and Sir Tobey, were his contemporaries most famous in their day."[1] After Garrick came Mrs. Kemble, Edmund Kean, Mrs. Siddons, Macready, and Booth, — names remembered to-day chiefly in connection with the Shakespearean rôles which they nobly played.

The great actors in Shakespeare's plays.

[1] Neilson and Thorndike: "The Facts about Shakespeare," page 174.

Conditions have not changed in our own time. The greatest actors of our own generation, Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Helena Modjeska, Ada Rehan, Forbes Robertson, Beerbohm Tree, Julia Marlowe, and Edward Sothern, have been seen at their best in the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare. Even in the twentieth century, with musical comedies, vaudeville, and moving-pictures to contend with, his plays are presented in greater number than are the plays of any other man who has ever lived. Nor are they revived merely for the sake of sentiment. They draw large audiences of all sorts of people. They still pay as purely business undertakings. "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" still earn money for actors and theatre-managers as they did three centuries ago. What is far more important, they still give pleasure and amusement, they still stir laughter and tears and awaken the imagination as they did at the Globe in London in the lifetime of their creator.

Shakespeare on the stage to-day.

Shakespeare, we know, wrote his plays to be acted: to him they were distinctly stage productions to be seen and heard at the theatre. So little did he think of their being read that he apparently had no concern about them in their book form. To-day, on the contrary, though they still are presented on the stage, it is in school and college classrooms, in libraries, and in homes that they are chiefly known. New editions are constantly appearing. Plays and novels that were popular twenty years

Shakespeare's plays read, as well as acted.

ago are out of print and difficult to find; the works of Shakespeare, in a dozen different forms, are in every book-store of England and America. Quite apart from their acting qualities, they have come to be regarded as the highest type of literature in our language.

This is not the place to give an extensive criticism of Shakespeare's works, nor a full analysis of the reasons why the world regards them so highly apart from their value as stage performances. It will be enough to remind the student that in nothing that has ever been written do we find a clearer or more faithful portrayal of all the varying moods and emotions of human nature. The characters which Shakespeare has created live in our minds both as individuals and as types of the ideal. He strips away the petty things from life and shows us the eternal elements underneath. He has that wonderful and rare quality called universality; for he expresses the thoughts and feelings of us all, — the things which we know to be great and true. Somewhere in his plays everyone finds himself, and the discovery, though he may not realize it at the time, makes a lasting impression. For Shakespeare is the supreme teacher: he suggests, but does not preach, the art of living. Other men have done all this. But Shakespeare has left us his wisdom and his interpretation of life in a more beautiful and stately diction, in phrasing more apt and pleasing, in poetry of greater imaginative power, than has ever come from the mind of man.

Why Shakespeare lives.

More books have been written about Shakespeare than about any other person who ever lived.[1] This is not surpris-

[1] For titles of those books on Shakespeare most interesting to students and teachers, see page 174.

ing when we consider that the interest in his plays, which has existed now for three centuries, is world-wide, and when we remember that the language in which he wrote often needs explanation and comment to make it perfectly clear to the average reader to-day. Almost every English and American poet of note has left a tribute to the greatest of all poets. Perhaps the best known are Milton's famous Epitaph, printed on page ix of this volume, and Ben Jonson's lines contributed to the First Folio in 1623, which are given on page 140. Here are a few other short poems, or selections from poems, which give honor and praise to those characteristics that have made Shakespeare the inspiration and the guiding-star of poets since Elizabethan times.

JAMES THOMSON

FOR lofty sense,
Creative fancy, and inspection keen
Through the deep windings of the human heart,
Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast?

Summer — 1727.

WILLIAM COLLINS

THE temper of our isle, though cold, is clear;
And such our genius, noble though severe.
Our Shakespeare scorn'd the trifling rules of art,
But knew to conquer and surprise the heart!
In magic chains the captive thought to bind,
And fathom all the depths of human kind!

On our Late Taste in Music — 1747

THOMAS GRAY

FAR from the sun and summer gale
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face: the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smiled.
"This pencil take (she said), whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of joy;
Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

The Progress of Poesy — 1757.

HENRY ALFORD

WE stood upon the tomb of him whose praise,
Time, nor oblivious thrift, nor envy chill,
Nor war, nor ocean with her severing space,
Shall hinder from the peopled world to fill;
And thus, in fulness of our heart, we cried:
God's works are wonderful — the circling sky,
The rivers that with noiseless footing glide,
Man's firm-built strength, and woman's liquid eye;
But the high spirit that sleepeth here below,
More than all beautiful and stately things,
Glory to God the mighty Maker brings;
To whom alone 'twas given the bounds to know
Of human action, and the secret springs
Whence the deep streams of joy and sorrow flow.

Stratford-upon-Avon — 1837

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

THERE Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sublime
With tears and laughter for all time!

A Vision of Poets — 1844.

LEIGH HUNT

. . . HUMANITY'S divinest son,
That sprightliest, gravest, wisest, kindest one . . .

Thoughts of the Avon — 1844.

ROBERT BROWNING

— I DECLARE our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand Poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare.

Christmas Eve and Easter Day — 1850.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

GREAT poet, 'twas thy art
To know thyself, and in thyself to be
Whate'er love, hate, ambition, destiny,
Or the firm, fatal purpose of the heart,
Can make of Man. Yet thou wert still the same,
Serene of thought, unhurt by thy own flame.

To Shakespeare — 1851.

WILLIAM WETMORE STORY

. . . SHAKESPEARE, whose strong soul could climb
Steeps of sheer terror, sound the ocean grand
Of Passion's deeps, or over Fancy's strand
Trip with his fairies, keeping step and time.
His, too, the power to laugh out full and clear,
With unembittered joyance, and to move
Along the silent, shadowy paths of love
As tenderly as Dante, whose austere,
Stern spirit through the worlds below, above,
Unsmiling strode, to tell their tidings here.

The Mighty Makers, II—1851

MATTHEW ARNOLD

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask — thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at. — Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Shakespeare—1867.

THE THEATRE OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY

When Shakespeare left Stratford and went to London, theatres were in their infancy. The first one had been built in 1576, when he was a lad of twelve, and on his arrival in the city there were but three small wooden structures devoted to the production of plays. Enthusiasm for the drama, however, was aglow. With the sanction of Queen Elizabeth, herself a lover of pageants and revels, and under the patronage of the powerful Earls of Leicester, Southampton, and Rutland, the popular demand for this form of amusement grew with amazing rapidity. Theatres shot up one after another until in 1633 there were at least nineteen in London, "a number," says Brandes, "which no modern town of 300,000 inhabitants can equal." Poets, courtiers, scholars, — everyone who could write, — turned to the making of plays. The art which Shakespeare found in its crude and humble beginnings, in the short period of his active life, that is, between 1585 and 1610, developed through every stage to its highest form, so that never in the three hundred years that have since elapsed has the drama of the Elizabethan days been surpassed. In this development Shakespeare was "a pioneer — almost the creator or first designer — as well as the practised workman in unmatched perfection."[1]

Popularity of the first theatres.

Though the first theatre in England was not erected until Shakespeare was twelve years old, long before his time there had been many different kinds of simple plays. The instinct to act out a story had existed from the child-

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer."

hood of the race. With the earliest telling of legends and folktales by minstrels and bards there had often been occasion for dramatic recital, dialogue, and action. For centuries, too, there had been the solemn mysteries and quaint old moralities. Mummers and bands of strolling players had wandered over Europe throughout the Middle Ages. The drama, therefore, which flowered in the last half of the sixteenth century, was not a new and sudden birth, but rather came as the natural outgrowth of centuries of crude and humble plays. In the beginning these had been closely connected with the service of the church; in fact, they had been a means of religious instruction rather than a form of amusement. To understand this more clearly, let us compare their origin with that of the Greek drama in earlier ages still.

Plays before theatres were built.

Many, many centuries before Shakespeare was born, — five or six hundred years B.C., — the God Dionysus, or Bacchus, was worshipped in Greece at country festivals by boisterous groups of men who chanted and marched and exchanged bantering jests as they danced about the altar and acted out legends connected with the god. These actors, who represented the satyr followers of Dionysus, generally were clad in goatskins, whence we have our word "tragedy," from the Greek *tragos*, a goat, and *tragodia*, a goat-song. From these simple beginnings sprang the drama of Greece, which produced Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The religious element persisted in ancient times much longer than in England, for the plays of the Greek dramatists who correspond to Shakespeare were still a form of worship. In the center of the orchestra

The religious origin of the Greek drama.

stood the altar of Dionysus, about which the chorus moved in solemn procession, chanting and reciting; before the performance began there were sacrifices to the god, and the plays were given in the spring on the days of the Dionysian festival. Greek tragedy was therefore not merely an entertainment, but a serious religious function. Beginning as a popular form of Nature worship, it finally became a means of expression for the most serious and finest of Greek thought and wisdom. As it spread from Athens to other towns, little by little it ceased to be a religious affair, until at last, as it gradually lost its vitality and splendor, its relation to the worship of Dionysus entirely disappeared. In similar fashion, comedy (from *comos*, a band of revellers, and *odé*, a song) developed from the ruder, more rustic elements in the worship of the same god, though here, as we might expect, the religious element did not persist as long as it did in its greater and more serious cousin, tragedy.

English drama begins in the Church.

More than eighteen hundred years later, in England, we find the beginnings of the drama again closely related to worship. At a time when few of the common people could read, the priests in the churches found no method of teaching their congregations the stories of the Bible so effective as the use of objects and pictures which appealed to the eye. The effectiveness of their teaching was enormously increased when they added movement, action, and talk to their picture lessons. Indeed, it was but a step from the impressive and beautiful service of the Mass to a dramatic presentation, in simple form, of the most solemn scenes in religious history. "In this manner the people not only *heard* the story of the Adoration of the Magi and of the

Marriage in Cana, but *saw* the story in tableau. In course of time the persons in these tableaux spoke and moved, and then it was but a logical step to the representation dramatically, by the priests before the altar, of the striking or significant events in the life of Christ."[1]

The Mysteries and Miracle Plays.

Thus in the services of the church at Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter were laid the foundations of our modern drama. These earliest performances, which were called Mysteries, dealt wholly with Bible stories, from the Creation to the Day of Judgment, and with the life of Christ; but as they became more and more popular with the masses, a broader field of subjects was sought, and lives of saints were used for dramatic material in the Miracle Plays of a century later. Not only were the priests the authors of both these simple forms of drama, but with the choir boys they were also the actors. For many years these plays were given on Holy Days and Saints' Days, either at the altar in the church itself, or in the enclosure just outside its walls. Their object continued to be largely religious instruction. In the Miracle plays, however, there were opportunities for a good deal of grotesque amusement. Incidents in the lives of the saints were not always serious or spiritual. The Devil gradually became more or less of a comic character. As the performances grew less solemn and awe-inspiring, the attitude of the people toward them changed. No longer did they attend them to worship, but rather to see a show and be amused. Gradually, therefore, they became separated from the service of the church, until finally they were banished once for all from the sacred walls, and but a few years after they had been

[1] W. H. Mabie: "William Shakespeare: Poet, Dramatist, and Man."

given at the altar they were being denounced by the priests as base and wicked things. Indeed, the feeling that plays are devices and temptations of Satan, which still exists, may be traced to the time, four centuries ago, when the drama lost favor with the Church.

Trade-Guilds and the plays.

The Mysteries and Miracle Plays did not decline in popularity when they were abandoned by the various religious orders. On the contrary, with the greater freedom and larger opportunity which separation from the church gave them, they increased rapidly in the people's favor. They were now taken up by the trade-guilds which, by the fifteenth century, developed elaborate and systematic methods of presenting them. Often different groups of tradesmen, such as the weavers' guild or the goldsmiths' guild, would unite, each band or "company" presenting an act or scene in the play to be undertaken. Huge, two-story covered wagons, somewhat like our large moving-vans to-day, took the place of stage and property-rooms. The actors dressed in the enclosed part of the vehicle, and then mounted a ladder or some rough stairs to the top story, or roof, where they performed their parts. Announced by heralds, — sometimes even by proclamation of the Mayor, — these pageants, as they were called, were drawn through the town on holidays and occasions of special festival. In the course of its progress the moving-stage would stop several times, — at the corners of the principal streets, in a public square, often at the doors of a church or cathedral. Then the crowd which had been following in its wake gathered about it to witness again the drama of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, of Noah, the flood and the ark, of Pilate and Herod, or one of the

numberless other stories with which they had been familiar from childhood.

Miracle Plays and Mysteries were followed by the Moralities in which abstract qualities such as Pleasure, Slander, Rage, Perseverance, and the Seven Deadly Sins took the place of characters from the Bible. This was a long stride forward. Now the field of subjects was greatly enlarged. Originality both in writing plays and in producing them was now first in demand. Opportunity had come at last for the creation of character, and for the use of everyday life on the stage. "Everyman," which has often been acted in our time, is a good example of what the Moralities at their best could be. Like the Miracle plays they were generally given by the guilds in marketplaces, enclosures of castles, and inn-yards where people could watch them from windows and balconies, as well as from the ground about the portable stage. Heavy, crude, and dull as these old plays now seem to us, they were intensely enjoyed by the populace of those far-away simpler times. From the eagerness and excitement with which they awaited their coming to town, or travelled long distances to see them, it is evident that a love of acting was inborn in the hearts of the people which sooner or later would develop a more finished and artistic drama.

The Moralities.

None of the performers in the Mysteries or Miracle Plays had been professional actors; but now with the Moralities came the opportunity for men to make a business of acting. As religious subjects gradually disappeared from the pageant stage, actors by profession came into existence. Wandering minstrels and story-tellers, mummers

Acting as a profession; companies of actors.

and strolling players, began to join together in troops for protection and companionship. "From the days of Henry VI onwards, members of the nobility began to entertain these companies of actors, and Henry VII and Henry VIII had their own private comedians. A 'Master of the Revels' was appointed to superintend musical and dramatic entertainments at court." A little later a statute of Parliament declared that "all actors who were not attached to the service of a nobleman should be treated as rogues and vagabonds, or in other words, might be whipped out of any town in which they appeared. This decree, of course, compelled all actors to enter the service of one great man or other, and we see that the aristocracy felt bound to protect their art. A large number of the first men in the kingdom, during Elizabeth's reign, had each his company of actors. The player received from the nobleman, whose 'servant' he was, a cloak bearing the arms of the family. On the other hand, he received no salary, but was simply paid for each performance given before his patron. We must thus conceive Shakespeare as bearing on his cloak the arms of Leicester, and afterwards of the Lord Chamberlain, until about his fortieth year. From 1604 onwards, when the company was promoted by James I to be His Majesty's Servants, it was the Royal arms that he wore."[1]

The first theatres in London.

For many years these companies of professional actors had no regular buildings in which to give their performances. Their plays were presented before their noble patrons in the great halls of their castles, and occasionally at court for the amusement of the king or queen. As late as Shake-

[1] Georg Brandes: "William Shakespeare," page 99.

speare's boyhood they were witnessed by the common people in the yards of taverns, in the open streets, or on village greens. If the actors played in London, either in the guild-halls or out of doors, they first had to obtain a license from the Lord Mayor for each performance, and then they were obliged to surrender half of their receipts to the city treasury. These trying conditions, with the growing popularity of the drama among all classes, finally led in 1576 to the erection of the first building for acting purposes. This was called the Theatre. The following year the Curtain was erected; in 1587, the Rose; in 1594, the Swan; and in 1599, the Globe. Once begun they shot up with wonderful rapidity. When Shakespeare arrived in the city there were but three playhouses; in 1611, when he retired to Stratford, there were probably ten or twelve.

The location of the first theatres.

In one sense London even then did not possess a theatre, for the early playhouses were not in the city at all. They were built on a tract of open land across the Thames, at the further end of London Bridge, outside the walls and well beyond the jurisdiction of the Mayor. The capital was then a town of small dimensions, barely a mile square, with a population of nearly 200,000 crowded together in houses which were constructed largely of wood. The streets were narrow, crooked, and muddy. Adequate means of fighting fire and disease did not exist. The Corporation was therefore strongly opposed to the erection of dangerous and inflammable structures upon the few vacant spaces within the walls. Moreover, among the Puritans, who were coming to be a large and influential body, opposition to the drama was growing more marked

and open; so that the companies of actors were obliged to put up their theatres well beyond the reach of the city's laws.

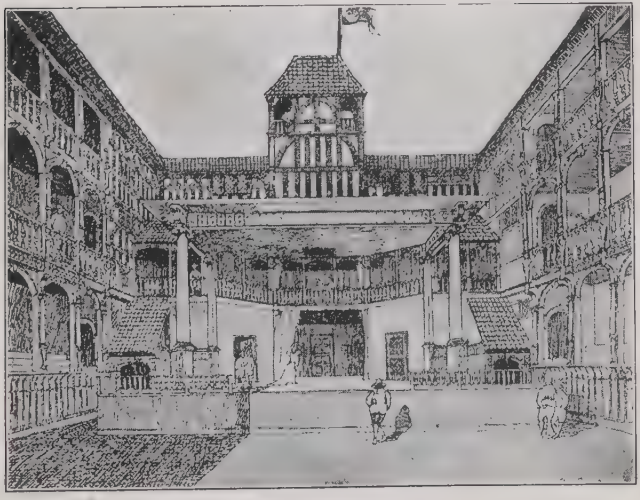
The Globe Theatre: its external appearance.

Let us now pay a visit to the Globe, to us the most interesting of all the theatres, for it is here that Shakespeare's company acts, and here many of his plays are first seen on the stage. We cross the Thames by London Bridge with its lines of crowded booths and shops and throngs of bustling tradesmen; or if it is fine weather we take a small boat and are rowed over the river to the southern shores. Here on the Bankside, in the part of London now called Southwark, beyond the end of the bridge, and in the open fields near the Bear Garden, stands a roundish, three-story wooden building, so high for its size that it looks more like a clumsy, squatty tower than a theatre. As we draw nearer we see that it is not exactly round after all, but is somewhat hexagonal in shape. The walls seem to slant a little inward, giving it the appearance of a huge thimble, or cocked hat, with six flattened sides instead of a circular surface. There are but few small windows and two low shabby entrances. The whole structure is so dingy and unattractive that we stand before it in wonder. Can this be the place where "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Julius Caesar" are put on the stage!

The Globe Theatre: the interior.

Our amazement on stepping inside is even greater. The first thing that astonishes us is the blue sky over our heads. The building has no roof except a narrow strip around the edge and a covering at the rear over the back part of the stage. The front of the stage and the whole center of the theatre is open to the air. Now we see how the in-

THE GLOBE THEATRE



INTERIOR OF AN ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

Godfrey's reconstruction of the Fortune Theatre

terior is lighted, though with the sunshine must often come rain and sleet and London fog. Looking up and out at the clouds floating by, we notice that a flag is flying from a short pole on the roof over the stage. This is most important, for it is announcing to the city across the river that this afternoon there is to be a play. It is bill-board, newspaper notice, and advertisement in one: and we may imagine the eagerness with which it is looked for among the theatre-loving populace of these later Elizabethan years. When the performance begins the flag will be lowered to proclaim to all that "the play is on."

Where, now, shall we sit? Before us on the ground level is a large open space, which corresponds to the orchestra circle on the floor of a modern play-house. But here there is only the flat bare earth, trodden down hard, with rushes and straw scattered over it. There is not a sign of a seat! This is the "yard," or, as it is sometimes called, "the pit," where, by paying a penny or two, London apprentices, sailors, laborers, and the mixed crowd from the streets may stand jostling together. Some of the more enterprising ones may possibly sit on boxes and stools which they bring into the building with them. Among these "groundlings" there will surely be bustling confusion, noisy wrangling, and plenty of danger from pickpockets; so we look about us to find a more comfortable place from which to watch the performance.

Seating arrangements in the theatre: the pit.

On three sides of us, and extending well around the stage, are three tiers of narrow balconies. In some places these are divided into compartments, or boxes. The prices here are higher, varying from a few pennies to half a crown, according to

The balconies and boxes.

the location. By putting our money into a box held out to us, — there are no tickets, — we are allowed to climb the crooked wooden stairs to one of these compartments. Here we find rough benches and chairs, and above all a little seclusion from the throng of men and boys below. Along the edge of the stage we observe that there are stools, but these places, elevated and facing the audience, seem rather conspicuous, and besides the prices are high. They will be taken by the young gallants and men of fashion of London, in brave and brilliant clothes, with light swords at their belts, wide ruffled collars about their necks, and gay plumes in their hats. It will be amusing to see them show off their fine apparel, and display their wit at the expense of the groundlings in the pit, and even of the actors themselves. We are safer, however, and much more comfortable here in the balcony among the more sober, quiet gentlemen of London, who with mechanics, tradesmen, nobles, and shop-keepers have come to see the play.

The stage.

The moment we entered the theatre we were impressed by the size of the stage. Looking down upon it from the balcony, it seems even larger and very near us. If it is like the stage of the Fortune it is square, as shown in the illustration facing page 160. Here in the Globe it is probably narrower at the front than at the back, tapering from the rear wall almost to a point. Whatever its shape, it is only a roughly-built, high platform, open on three sides, and extending halfway into the "yard." Though a low railing runs about its edge, there are no footlights, — all performances are in the afternoon by the light of day which streams down through the open top, — and strangest of all there is no curtain. At each

side of the rear we can see a door that leads to the "tiring-rooms," where the actors dress, and from which they make their entrances. These are the "green-rooms" and wings of our theatre to-day. Between the doors is a curtain that now before the play begins is drawn together. Later when it is pulled aside, — not *upward* as curtains usually are now, — we shall see a shallow recess or alcove which serves as a secondary, or inner stage. Over this extends a narrow balcony covered by a roof which is supported at the front corners by two columns that stand well out from the wall. Still higher up, over the inner stage, is a sort of tower, sometimes called the "hut," and from a pole on this the flag is flying which summons the London populace from across the Thames. Rushes are strewn over the floor; there are no drops or wings or walls of painted scenery. In its simplicity and bareness it reminds us of the rude stage of the strolling players. Indeed, the whole interior of the building seems to be but an adaptation of the tavern-yard and village-green.

Use of the main stage.

How, we wonder, can a play like "Julius Caesar" or "The Merchant of Venice" be staged on such a crude affair as this! What are the various parts of it for? Practically all acting is done, we shall see, on the front of the platform well out among the crowd in the pit, with the audience on three sides of the performers. All out-of-door scenes will be acted here, from a conversation in the streets of Venice or a dialogue in a garden, to a battle, a procession, or a banquet in the Forest of Arden. Here, too, with but the slightest alteration, or even with no change at all, interior scenes will be presented. With the "groundlings" crowded close up to its edges, and with young gallants

sitting on its sides, this outer stage comes close to the people. On it will be all the main action of the drama: the various arrangements at the rear are for supplementary purposes and certain important effects.

Uses of the inner stage.

The inner stage, or alcove beyond the curtain, is used in many ways. It may serve for any room somewhat removed from the scene of action, such as a passage-way or a study. It often is made to represent a cave, a shop, or a prison. Here Othello, in a frenzy of jealous passion, strangles Desdemona as she lies in bed; here probably the ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus in his tent on the plains of Philippi; here stand the three fateful caskets in the mansion at Belmont, as we see by Portia's words,

> "Go, *draw aside the curtains*, and discover
> The several caskets to this noble Prince."

Tableaux and scenes within scenes, such as the short play in "Hamlet" by which the prince "catches the conscience of the king," are acted in this recess. But the most important use is to give the effect of a change of scene. By drawing apart and closing the curtain, with a few simple changes of properties in this inner compartment, a different background is possible. By such a slight variation of setting at the rear, the platform in the pit is transformed, by the quick imagination of the spectators, from a field or a street to a castle hall or a wood. Thus, the whole stage becomes the Forest of Arden by the use of a little greenery in the distance. Similarly, a few trees and shrubs at the rear of the inner stage, when the curtain is thrown aside, will change the setting from the court-room in the fourth act of "The Merchant of Venice," to the

scene in the garden at Belmont which immediately follows.

The balcony over the inner stage serves an important purpose, too. With the windows, which are often just over the doors leading to the tiring-rooms, it gives the effect of an upper story in a house, of walls in a castle, a tower, or any elevated position. This is the place, of course, where Juliet comes to greet Romeo who is in the garden below. In "Julius Caesar" when Cassius says,

Uses of the balcony over the stage.

"Go Pindarus, *get higher on that hill;*

* * * * * *

And tell me what thou notest about the field,"

the soldier undoubtedly climbs to the balcony, for a moment later, looking abroad over the field of battle, he reports to Cassius what he sees from his elevation. Here Jessica appears when Lorenzo calls under Shylock's windows, "Ho! who's within?" and on this balcony she is standing when she throws down to her lover a box of her father's jewels. "Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains," she says, and retires into the house, appearing below a moment later to run away with Lorenzo and his masquerading companions.

Besides these simple devices, if we look closely enough we shall see a trap-door, or perhaps two, in the platform. These are for the entrance of apparitions and demons. They correspond, in a way, to the balcony by giving the effect of a place lower than the stage level. Thus in the first scene of "The Tempest," which takes place in a storm at sea, the notion of a ship may be suggested to the audience by sailors

Other stage devices.

entering from the trap-door, as they might come up a hatchway to a deck. If it is a play with gods and goddesses and spirits, we may be startled to see them appear and disappear through the air. Evidently there is machinery of some sort in the hut over the balcony which can be used for lowering and raising deities and creatures that live above the earth. On each side of the stage is a flight of steps leading to the balcony. These are often covered, as plainly shown by Mr. Godfrey's reconstruction of the Fortune Theatre facing page 160. Here sit councils, senates, and princes with their courts. Macbeth uses them to give the impression of ascending to an upper chamber when he goes to kill the king, and down them he rushes to his wife after he has committed the fearful murder.

Scenery on the stage.

What astonishes us most, however, is the absence of scenery. To be sure, some slight attempt has been made to create scenic illusion. There are, perhaps, a few trees and boulders, a table, a chair or two, and pasteboard dishes of food. But there is little more. In the only drawing of the interior of an Elizabethan theatre that has been preserved, — a sketch of the Swan made in 1596, — the stage has absolutely no furniture except one plain bench on which one of the actors is sitting. Here before us in the Globe the walls may be covered with loose tapestries, black if the play is to be a tragedy, blue if a comedy; but it is quite possible that they are entirely bare. A placard on one of the pillars announces that the stage is now a street in Venice, now a courtroom, now the hall of a stately mansion. It may be that the Prologue, or even the actors themselves, will tell us at the opening of an act just where the scene is laid and what we are to imagine the platform to represent.

In "Henry V," for instance, the Prologue at the beginning not only explains the setting of the play, but asks forgiveness of the audience for attempting to put on the stage armies and battles and the "vasty fields of France."

"But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraiséd spirit that hath dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object. Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
Within *this wooden O* the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million;
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high-uprearéd and abutting fronts
The perilous, narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth,
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass."

In "As You Like It" it is an actor who tells us at the opening of the second act that we are now to imagine the Forest of Arden before us. In the first sentence which

the banished Duke speaks, he says, "Are not *these woods* more free from peril than the envious court?" and a moment later, when Touchstone and the runaway maidens first enter the woods, Rosalind exclaims, "Well, this is the Forest of Arden!" A hint, a reference, a few simple contrivances, a placard or two, — these are enough. "Imaginary forces" are here in the audience keenly alive, and they will do the rest. By means of them, without the illusion of scenery, the bare wooden stage will become a ship, a garden, a palace, a London tavern. Whole armies will enter and retire by a single door. Battles will rage, royal processions pass in and out, graves will be dug, lovers will woo, — and all with hardly an important alteration of the setting. Lack of scenery does not limit the type of scenes that can be presented. On the contrary, it gives almost unlimited opportunities to the dramatist, for the spectators, in the force and freshness of their imagination, are children who willingly "play" that the stage is anything the author suggests. Their youthful enthusiasm, their simple tastes, above all their lack of knowledge of anything different, give them the enviable power of imagining the grandest, most beautiful, and most varied scenes on the same bare, unadorned boards. Apparently they are well satisfied with their stage; for it is not until nearly fifty years after Shakespeare's death that movable scenery is used in an English theatre.

The performance of a play.

It is now three o'clock and time for the performance to begin. Among the motley crowd of men and boys in the yard there is no longer room for another box or stool. They are evidently growing impatient and jostle together in noisy confusion. Suddenly three long blasts on a trumpet sound. The

mutterings in the pit subside, and all eyes turn toward the stage. First an actor, clothed in a black mantle and wearing a laurel wreath on his head, comes from behind the curtain and recites the prologue. From it we learn something of the story of the play to follow, and possibly a little about the scene of action. This is all very welcome, for we have no programs and the plot of the drama is unfamiliar. In a minute or two the Prologue retires and the actors of the first scene enter. We are soon impressed by the rapidity with which the play moves on. There is little stage "business"; though there may be some music between the acts, still there are no long waits; one scene follows another as quickly as the actors can make their exits and entrances. The whole play, therefore, does not last much over two hours. At the close there is an epilogue, spoken by one of the actors, after which the players kneel and join in a prayer for the queen. Then comes a final bit of amusement for the groundlings: the clown, or some other comic character of the company, sings a popular song, dances a brisk and boisterous jig, and the performance of the day is done.

During our novel experience this afternoon at the Globe, nothing has probably surprised us more than the elaborate and gorgeous costumes of the actors. At a time when so little attention is paid to scenery we naturally expect to find the dress of the players equally simple and plain. But we are mistaken. The costumes, to be sure, make little or no pretension to fit the period or place of action. Caesar appears in clothes such as are worn by a duke or an earl in 1601. "They are the ordinary dresses of various classes of the day, but they are often of rich material, and

Costumes of the actors.

in the height of current fashion. False hair and beards, crowns and sceptres, mitres and croziers, armour, helmets, shields, vizors, and weapons of war, hoods, bands, and cassocks, are relied on to indicate among the characters differences of rank or profession. The foreign observer, Thomas Platter of Basle, was impressed by the splendor of the actors' costumes. 'The players wear the most costly and beautiful dresses, for it is the custom in England, that when noblemen or knights die, they leave their finest clothes to their servants, who, since it would not be fitting for them to wear such splendid garments, sell them soon afterwards to the players for a small sum.'"[1] But no money is spared to secure the fitting garment for an important part. Indeed, it is quite probable that more is paid for a king's velvet robe or a prince's silken doublet than is given to the author for the play itself. Whether the elaborate costumes are appropriate or not, their general effect is pleasing, for they give variety and brilliant color to the bare and unattractive stage.

Female parts taken by boys.

If we are happily surprised by the costuming of the play, what shall we say of the actors who take the female parts! They are very evidently not women, or even girls, but boys whose voices have not changed, dressed, tricked out, and trained to appear as feminine as possible. It is considered unseemly for a woman to appear on a public stage, — indeed, the professional actress does not exist and will not be seen in an English theatre for nearly a century. Meanwhile plays are written with few female parts (remember "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," and "Macbeth") and young boys are trained to take these

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Modern Stage," page 41.

rôles. The theatregoers seem to enjoy the performance just as much as we do to-day with mature and accomplished actresses on the stage. Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists treated the situation with good grace or indifference. Thus in the epilogue of "As You Like It" Rosalind says to the audience, "*If I were a woman* I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me." The jest, of course, consists in the fact that she is *not* a woman at all, but a stripling. In a more tragic vein Cleopatra, before she dies, complains that "the quick comedians . . . will stage us, . . . and I shall see some *squeaking Cleopatra boy my* greatness." It may be that the boys who take the women's parts this afternoon wear masks to make them seem less masculine, though how that can improve the situation it is difficult to understand. There is an amusing reference to this practice in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." When Flute, the bellows-mender, is assigned a part in the drama which the mechanics of Athens are rehearsing, he exclaims, "Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming"; to which protest Quince replies, "That's all one: you shall play it *in a mask*, and you may speak as small as you will."

The audience at the Globe.

Though rapid action, brilliant costumes, and, above all, the force and beauty of the lines, may lead us to forget that the heroine is only a boy, it is more difficult to keep our attention from being distracted by the audience around us. It surprises us that there are so few women present. We notice, too, that many of those who have come wear a mask of silk or velvet over their faces. Evidently it is hardly the proper thing for a respectable woman to be seen in a public theatre. The people in the balconies are

fairly orderly, but below in the pit the crowd is restless, noisy, and at times even boisterous. Bricklayers, dock-laborers, apprentices, serving-men, and idlers stand in jostling confusion. There are no police and no laws that are enforced. Pickpockets ply an active trade. One, we see, has been caught and is bound to the railing at the edge of the stage where he is an object of coarse jests and ridicule. Refreshment-sellers push about in the throng with apples and sausages, nuts and ale. There is much eating and drinking and plenty of smoking. On the stage the gallants are a constant source of bother to the players. They interrupt the Prologue, criticise the dress of the hero, banter the heroine, and joke with the clown. Even here in the gallery we can hear their comments — far from flattering — upon a scene that does not please them; when a little later they applaud, their praises are just as vigorous. Once it seems as though the play is going to be brought to a standstill by a wrangling quarrel between one of these rakish gentlemen and a group of groundlings near the stage. Their attention, however, is taken by the entrance of the leading actor declaiming a stirring passage, and their differences are soon forgotten. It is, on the whole, a good-natured rough crowd of the common people, the lower and middle classes from the great city across the river, — more like the crowd one sees to-day at a circus or a professional ball-game than at a theatre of the highest type. They loudly cheer the clown's final song and dance, and then with laughter, shouting, and jesting they pour out of the yard and in a moment the building is empty. The play is over until to-morrow afternoon.

What a contrast it all has been to a play in a theatre of

the twentieth century! When we think of the uncomfortable benches, the flat bare earth of the pit, the lack of scenery, footlights, and drop curtains; when we hear the shrill voices of boys piping the women's parts, and see mist and rain falling on spectator's heads, we are inclined to pity the playgoer of Elizabethan times. Yet he needs no pity. To him the theatre of his day was sufficient. The drama enacted there was a source of intense and genuine pleasure. His keen enthusiasm; his fresh, youthful eagerness; above all, his highly imaginative power, — far greater than ours to-day, — gave him an ability to understand and enjoy the poetry and dramatic force of Shakespeare's works, which we, with all the improvements of our palatial theatres, cannot equal. Crude, simple, coarse as they now seem to us, we can look back only with admiration upon the Swan and the Curtain and the Globe; for in them "The Merchant of Venice," "As You Like It," "Julius Caesar," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth" were received with acclamations of joy and wonder. In them the genius of Shakespeare was recognized and given a place in the drama of England which now, after three centuries have passed, it holds in the theatres and in the literature of all the world.

Conclusions to be drawn.

BOOKS OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS OF SHAKESPEARE

[A bibliography of works on Shakespeare would make a volume of considerable size. Here are a few of the most useful books for students and teachers.]

A Life of William Shakespeare.
SIDNEY LEE. The Macmillan Co.

The Facts about Shakespeare.
NEILSON AND THORNDIKE. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare.
WALTER RALEIGH. The Macmillan Co.

Introduction to Shakespeare.
EDWARD DOWDEN. Charles Scribner's Sons.

William Shakespeare.
JOHN MASEFIELD. Henry Holt & Co.

Shakespeare: the Boy.
W. J. ROLFE. Harper Bros.

Shakespeare's England.
WILLIAM WINTER. Moffat, Yard & Co.

Shakespeare Manual.
F. G. FLEAY. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare and the Modern Stage.
SIDNEY LEE. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist.
GEORGE P. BAKER. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare's Theatre.
ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE. The Macmillan Co.

Handbook to the Works of Shakespeare.
MORTON LUCE. George Bell & Sons.

Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.
WILLIAM HAZLITT. J. M. Dent (Everyman's Library).

Elizabethan England.
L. WITHINGTON. Walter Scott (London).

Shakespeare and Music.
EDWARD W. NAYLOR, Mus. Bac. J. M. Dent & Co. (London).

Puck of Pook's Hill.
Rewards and Fairies.
RUDYARD KIPLING. Doubleday, Page & Co.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, in the "Ben Greet Shakespeare."
Doubleday, Page & Co.

This edition contains full stage directions, with many practical suggestions for amateur actors.

An interesting story of Shakespeare's times is *Master Skylark*, JOHN BENNETT (The Century Co.). Scott's *Kenilworth* is a story of London and Warwickshire in 1575, and *The Fortunes of Nigel* gives a good picture of London in 1604 — the year of "Othello." *Judith Shakespeare*, by WILLIAM BLACK, is a masterly tale of the Elizabethan period. Alfred Noyes' *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern* (Frederick A. Stokes Co.) is a series of imaginative stories written in beautiful poetry and dealing with men and events of Shakespeare's day. Another good book in the same field is *Anne of Feversham*, by J. C. SNAITH (D. Appleton and Co.).

The great "Variorum" edition of Shakespeare's works, edited by H. H. FURNESS (J. B. Lippincott Co.), contains besides the plays and poems a collection of comment and criticism by all the great Shakespeare scholars for the last two hundred years.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ = *persons of the drama; the cast.*

The early editions of the play have no list of characters: it was first inserted by Nicholas Rowe, a Shakespeare scholar and critic, in 1709. The division into Acts and Scenes, also, was made in the later editions. The time occupies three days, or, to be exact, one long night, preceded and followed by a day. It is arranged as follows:

Day 1. Act I.

Day 2. Acts II, III, and part of Scene I, Act IV.

Day 3. The remainder of Act IV, Act V.

The names of the Court characters were taken from Plutarch's "Life of Theseus." In naming his Athenian workmen Shakespeare followed the fashion of the old farces and labeled them from some peculiarity. Quince probably has a rough and wrinkled skin; Snug was a "joiner" and made neat joints. Bottom is named for the nucleus of thread used by a weaver in winding: one of the characters in "The Taming of the Shrew" says, "Beat me to death with a bottom of brown thread!" Flute, the bellows-mender, has a high shrill voice; Snout's name refers to the nose of a kettle as well as to the personal appearance of the tinker himself. Starveling, an insignificant little fellow, reminds us of the old saying that a tailor is "the ninth part of a man." Clearly, the actors marked with such names would present very different types. The Fairy names are partly fictitious and partly derived from folklore and romance.

ACT I

Scene 1

The First Act sets before us the conditions at the opening of the play and acquaints us with all the human actors. We learn of the approaching marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta and we see that the course of true love does not run smooth for the

Lovers. The Rustics discuss their plans to please the Duke. At the close we know that the Lovers and the Rustics, each group intent upon its own concerns, are all going on the morrow night to the wood outside Athens.

2. apace: swiftly. **four happy days**: There were actually only *three* days — the day mentioned; the following day and night; and the day after that, when the weddings were celebrated and the rustic play was given. Having noted the fact, we may dismiss it from our minds; Shakespeare was sometimes careless and the inconsistency here makes no difference to the progress of the plot. If we say "Three happy days" the matter arranges itself.

4. lingers: checks, puts off. Used transitively.

5–6. Theseus compares himself to a young man who is impatiently awaiting the death of an old relative to whom he has to pay part of his income.

5. dowager: a widow whose dowry must be paid out of the estate.

6. withering out: causing the income to dwindle as she herself withers away.

13. pert: lively.

15. companion: used contemptuously. **pomp**: a stately show, a procession.

16. I woo'd thee with my sword: Hippolyta was Queen of the Amazons, and was beaten in fight by Theseus.

19. triumph: public procession in honor of victory. Cp. "Julius Cæsar":

> Wherefore rejoice? What triumphs brings he home?

22. Full of vexation. Here is the first complication. Egeus comes with his complaint, upon which Theseus must give judgment. But the two lovers act for themselves.

27. bosom: heart, affection.

31. feigning . . . feigning: a play upon words such as is found frequently in the plays. The first word probably means "faining," *i.e.* "loving"; the second, "false."

32. stol'n the impression of her fantasy: printed himself by stealth upon her imagination.

33. gawds: ornaments. **conceits**: fancy devices.

34. knacks: trinkets.

35. prevailment: influence. **unharden'd**: innocent.

36. filched: stolen.

39. Be it so: if it so happen.

41. ancient privilege of Athens: The laws of Solon, first Athenian lawmaker, gave the father powers of life and death over his child.

45. Immediately: expressly.

51. disfigure: destroy.

54. in this kind: as a husband. **wanting your father's voice**: lacking your father's consent.

60. how it may concern my modesty, etc.: how I, as a modest girl, can argue my case in your presence.

68. Know of your youth: consult your youthful feelings. **blood**: disposition, temperament.

70. livery of a nun: costume of a woman vowed to a religious life. Such were the priestesses of Diana, and the Vestal Virgins in Rome.

71. For aye: forever. **mew'd**: shut in, imprisoned.

75. maiden pilgrimage: life passed as a nun.

76–8. The rose that is gathered and gives out its sweetness is happier than the flower that withers on the stem. **earthlier happy**: happier in a worldly sense.

80. virgin patent: privilege of virginity.

81. unwished yoke: undesired authority.

89. Diana's altar: The Duke tells Hermia that if she refuses to marry Demetrius she must become a priestess of Diana. Note that her father is more severe — see lines 42–5. **protest**: vow solemnly.

92. crazed: flawed, unsound.

93–4. A pleasant bit of sarcasm.

98. estate: bestow — used as a verb.

99. derived: descended.

100. as well possess'd: as wealthy, with as good property.

102. If not with vantage: if I have not even some advantage over him in this respect.

106. I'll avouch it to his head: I'll swear it to his face.

113. self-affairs: my own business.

116. some private schooling: Theseus is going to give Egeus and Demetrius a "talking to" privately.

120. extenuate: mitigate. The law is above the Duke.

122. what cheer, my love? Theseus turns to Hippolyta, who all this time has stood apart in silence, with an affectionate word.

125. against: in preparation for.

131. beteem: allow.

135. blood: birth, rank in life.

136. cross: trial, annoyance.

137. misgraffed: ill-grafted, badly united.

141. sympathy: equality, agreement.

143. momentany: brief, momentary. Latin: *momentaneus*.

145. collied: black; literally, "begrimed with coal."

146. spleen: fit of passion.

145–9. "This splendid metaphor illustrates not only the brief span of love, but also its power to enlarge and expand the vision." Love, like the swift lightning, unfolds both heaven and earth — both the spiritual and the material worlds — to the lover.

150. cross'd: balked, checked by misfortune.

151. an edict in destiny: a law of fate.

152. teach our trial patience: teach ourselves patience to endure our trial.

153. a customary cross: a common misfortune.

154. As due to love: as usual in love affairs.

155. fancy's: love's. "Fancy" generally has this meaning in the plays.

156. persuasion: opinion.

159. remote: distant.

160. respects: regards, considers.

164. forth: out of.

167. To do observance to a morn of May: to observe the rites of May-day, according to the old English custom. In Chaucer's "Knightes Tale" Theseus and Hippolyta, after their wedding, go out in state to the forest to "doon observaunce."

"It was anciently the custom," says an English writer, "for all ranks of people to go out a-Maying early on the first of May. In the villages in the North of England, the juvenile part of both sexes were wont to rise a little after midnight on the morning of that day, and walk to some neighboring wood, accompanied with music and the blowing of horns, where they broke down branches from the trees and adorned them with nosegays and crowns of flowers. . . . They returned homewards with their booty about the time of sunrise."

170. with the golden head: an allusion to the old myth that Cupid carried arrows tipped either with gold or lead. The former aroused love, the latter repelled it.

171. the simplicity of Venus' doves: The chariot of Venus, Cupid's mother, was drawn by doves. "Simplicity" means purity, or truth.

173. the Carthage queen: Dido, queen of Carthage, burned herself upon a funeral pyre when she found that Aeneas ("the false Troyan") had deserted her. The story, which is a favorite with Shakespeare, is told in Virgil's "Aeneid."

182. your fair: your beauty.

183. lode-stars: leading, or guiding, stars; like the Pole-star which guided sailors over the sea.

186. favour: appearance, looks.

190–1. "If I had all the world, but had not Demetrius, I would give all the world to be changed to you and have Demetrius." **bated**: excepted. **translated**: changed, transformed.

194–201. These lines form a good example of "antithesis," or balanced construction. It occurs not only in line against line, but within the lines themselves. The structure is frequent in the early plays.

209. Phoebe: the moon.

211. bladed grass: with fresh shoots, newly green.

215. faint: pale. Primroses are a pale greenish yellow.

219. stranger companies: the companionship of strangers.

232. holding no quantity: having no value, being below love's estimation of them.

233. transpose: transform.

239. beguiled: deceived.

240. waggish: mischievous. **in game**: in jest.

242. eyne: old plural for "eyes."

249. a dear expense: a valuable expense, an expense which I would gladly incur.

250. enrich my pain: repay my suffering.

251. to have his sight: the sight of Demetrius.

250–1. "If he thanks me for my news I shall be well repaid; I mean to repay my sufferings at least by the sight of Demetrius as we go and come back."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is the complaint of Egeus introduced so early in the play?
2. How does Theseus impress you in this scene (*a*) as a lover, (*b*) as a ruler?
3. What plan is made by Lysander and Hermia to thwart her father's wishes?
4. How does Helena explain the infatuation of Demetrius for Hermia? What is she going to do about it?
5. Do the hardships of the Lovers affect you very deeply?

ACT I

Scene 2

We now meet the Athenian workingmen, the "rustics," who are to do honor to Theseus by acting an interlude at his wedding. It is plain that the wedding festivities form the thread which binds together the discordant elements — Lovers and Rustics are both going to the forest. Rehearsals and plays such as we find undertaken by Bottom and his friends were doubtless common in England in Shakespeare's time — he himself must have been present on just such occasions. You will note that prose is always used for the speech of the Rustics. It was Shakespeare's way of distinguishing them as comic persons, and it is especially effective in emphasizing the contrast between Bottom and the Fairies.

2. you were best: it would be best for you. **generally**: Bottom means "individually."

3. scrip: manuscript of the names.

5. interlude: An "interlude" was a short dramatic sketch — a "farce"— which was introduced between the courses of a banquet, or during the progress of a play.

9. grow to a point: Bottom seems to mean "come to the point."

10–11. The most lamentable comedy, etc.: Shakespeare here is poking fun at the titles of some plays which were extant at the time. For example: "A lamentable Tragedie, mixed full of pleasant Mirth, containing The Life of Cambises, King of Persia, from the beginning of his kingdom until his death."

11. Pyramus and Thisby: The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was well known to Elizabethan play-goers. It had been translated from the Latin poet Ovid and had been retold in prose and verse by various English writers. Its familiarity to the audience was doubtless the reason why Shakespeare made his Rustics choose it. Their handling of it, of course, is farcical, and it becomes a burlesque on the crude effects of the older dramas.

21. ask: call for.

23. condole: Bottom probably means "lament," or "cause weeping." But do not try to make sense out of everything he says.

24. humour: caprice. **a tyrant**: It is interesting to note Bottom's idea of good tragic acting. There was plenty of the kind to be seen on the stage (is it quite extinct to-day?) and Shakespeare laughs good-naturedly at this type of acting. In "Hamlet" he takes the matter more seriously and offers some sharp criticism, together with some sound advice in the passage beginning: "O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters." Read this whole passage, which you will find in Act III, Scene 2, lines 1–43.

25. Ercles: Hercules, a part always acted in the ranting, blood-and-thunder style that Bottom so greatly admired. Herod was another part of the same type. **to tear a cat in**: to rant violently. Hamlet, in the advice to the players mentioned

above, condemns those who act to " split the ears of the groundlings."

26–33. These lines are, of course, nonsense. They show Bottom's conception of tragic poetry, and burlesque some of the performances of the day.

35. condoling: soothing, melancholy.

42. a beard coming: in Shakespeare's time the parts of women were always played by boys.

43. That's all one: " That's all right ! "

44. small: soft.

45. An: if.

46. Thisne, Thisne: perhaps an attempt to represent Bottom speaking in " a monstrous little voice."

57. Pyramus' father, etc.: The fathers and the mother (l. 55) do not appear in the performance.

58. joiner: cabinet-maker.

62. extempore: offhand, without preparation.

69. fright the duchess and the ladies: For a similar situation in real life, see page 84.

74. aggravate: Bottom means just the opposite — " moderate."

75. sucking dove: does he mean " sucking lamb "?

84. discharge: perform. Beards formed part of the properties of all stage companies.

85. orange-tawny: reddish yellow. **purple-in-grain**: natural color which will not wash out.

86. French crown color: bright golden yellow, the color of a French crown piece.

94. bill of properties: list of things belonging to the company — Quince is " property-manager."

97. obscenely: Does Bottom mean " obscurely "?

100. hold or cut bow-strings: When a party was made up to shoot at the butts in archery, the competitors used this phrase in promising to be present; each must " hold," or keep promise, or they might " cut his bow strings " and spoil him for an archer. He must keep his appointment, or give up shooting.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you differentiate the characters of the Rustics by what they say to one another?
2. Who seems to you the stupidest man in the company?
3. How does Quince persuade Bottom to stick to one part?
4. Show how the action of the play is set forward by this scene.
5. Set the stage to indicate the house of Peter Quince, where this conversation takes place.

ACT II

Scene 1

It is now the " morrow night "; Lovers and Rustics are in the wood. The first scene introduces Puck and the Fairies, and we watch the quarrel between Oberon and Titania; the second shows how Oberon carries out his plan of punishing his Queen. In both scenes the Lovers appear and Puck's mischief-making begins to complicate matters. *Puck*, or Robin Goodfellow, was the Old English spirit of the countryside. For a sympathetic account, read the collection of stories by Kipling — " Puck of Pook's Hill."

3. thorough: old spelling for " through." It survives in the word " thoroughfare."

4. pale: inclosure.

7. the moone's sphere: According to astronomers of the time, the moon was set in a sphere which revolved round the earth. Other spheres contained the planets and the fixed stars; there were in all nine of these spheres. See, later, the lines (II. 1. 153–4):

> And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maid's music.

9. dew her orbs upon the green: bright green circles in the grass of a meadow, called in England " fairy rings."

10. pensioners: Queen Elizabeth had at Court a body of handsome young men of rank, clad in gorgeous uniforms, who

acted as a personal body-guard. They were known as Gentlemen Pensioners.

12. favors: love-tokens.

16. lob of spirits: buffoon, clown. Puck was very fond of playing tricks, as he says himself by and by.

17. anon: immediately.

20. fell: cruel.

23. changeling: boy changed in his cradle. There was a widespread superstition that fairies and elves sometimes stole children. The child was taken away before it had been baptized, and a hideous wizened elf was put in its place. The boy referred to here was a human changeling.

25. trace: wander through, traverse.

29. sheen: shining, brightness.

30. square: quarrel. **elves**: fairies.

33. shrewd: sharp, mischievous.

35. villagery: village folk.

36. skim milk: "you skim milk" — note the change from the third to the second person. **quern**: hand-mill for grinding corn.

37. bootless: in vain, uselessly. **churn**: for butter.

38. barm: yeast.

39. harm: misfortune.

40–1. These lines refer to the old belief that Puck did housework for those whom he liked.

47. gossip's bowl: "Gossip" here means a talkative old woman, although the word originally meant "friend." The "bowl" is the drink. The word "gossip" has an interesting history. Originally it meant one who stood sponsor at the christening of a baby, and since the gossips thus were closely associated, it took on the meaning of close friend, or crony. Friends usually have a good deal to say to one another; hence was added the idea of a talkative person. And because old women are supposed to be much given to talking, we get the meaning of the word as used here — a talkative old woman. This particular gossip is sharing a drink ("bowl") with her cronies. One such drink, well liked in Shakespeare's day, was known as "lamb's wool." It was a compound of ale, sugar, nutmeg, toast, and

" roasted crabs," or crab-apples. See the Winter Song at the end of " Love's Labor's Lost ":

> When all around the wind doth blow . . .
> When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl.

50. dewlap: loose skin under the throat.

51. aunt: a familiar term for old woman. **saddest tale**: gravest or most serious story.

54. and " tailor " cries: No satisfactory explanation has been found for this expression. Dr. Johnson says, rather vaguely, that it was applied to any one who sat down too suddenly — as a tailor squats on his board.

54–5. cough . . . laugh: spelled " coff " and " loff " in the early editions, for the sake of the rhyme.

55. quire: company, " crowd."

56. waxen in their mirth: grow merrier and merrier. **neeze**: sneeze.

57. wasted: spent, passed.

66. Corin: Corin and Phillida are traditional names for shepherd lovers.

67. Playing on flutes of oat-straw and making love-poetry.

69. steppe of India: Indian plateaus. Shakespeare associates his fairies with the Far East, the land of mystery.

70. bouncing Amazon: Hippolyta. Titania taunts Oberon with his supposed love-affairs in the past. Oberon replies in kind.

71. buskin'd: wearing buskins, or high hunting-boots.

75. glance at: attack indirectly.

78–80. Aegle was a wood nymph; **Ariadne**, the daughter of Minos, King of Crete, was carried off by Theseus and afterwards deserted on the island of Naxos; **Antiopa**, the mother of Hippolyta. Shakespeare took these names direct from North's " Plutarch."

81–116. For comment on this passage, see pages 82–3.

81. middle summer's spring: the beginning of midsummer.

82. dale: small valley. **mead**: meadow.

83. paved fountain: spring with a pebbly bottom.

84. beached margent: beach at the edge of the sea; seashore formed by a beach.

85. ringlets: dances in a ring.

87. piping to us in vain: because we could not dance to their music. Cp. S. Matthew xi, 17: "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced."

89. Contagious: harmful, pestilential.

90. pelting: little, insignificant, paltry.

91. continents: the banks which hold them in.

96. murrion: dead from cattle plague, or murrain.

97. nine men's morris: a country game still played in some parts of England. Three squares were marked out, one within another, and holes cut in the turf at the corners and in the middle of each side. Each player had nine men, the object being to get these all placed three in a row according to certain rules. The opponent's men might be taken, as in chess or checkers.

98. quaint mazes: Complicated figures, or labyrinths, were marked out on village greens, and kept fresh by boys running through the windings. **wanton**: sportive.

100. human mortals: Titania is speaking as a fairy. The meaning of the line is that the bad summer led men to wish for winter and winter pastime.

101. They sing no hymns to the moon; therefore she, etc.

102. governess of floods: ruler of the tides. See "Hamlet," I. 1. 119:

> The moist star
> Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands.

104. rheumatic diseases: The term then included colds and coughs, as well as what we now know as rheumatism.

105. this distemperature: this disturbance between Oberon and Titania.

108. old Hiems' thin and icy crown: the bald head of Winter.

112. their wonted liveries: their usual appearances, their customary garbs. **mazed**: bewildered, confused.

113. By their increase: the natural products or fruits of each season, which no longer come at the time appointed.

115. debate: quarrel.

117. it lies in you: it is in your power.

120. henchman: attendant, page.

122. votaress of my order: one who was vowed to my service.

123. spiced Indian air: spicy, balmy.

126. embarked traders on the flood: the merchants in their ships at sea. Cp. "The Merchant of Venice," I. 1. 10:

Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood.

132. round: a circular dance.

137. chide downright: quarrel outright.

140–56. For comment upon this passage, see page 90.

143. breath: used of the voice in singing.

144. civil: quiet, as if soothed by the music.

147–56. These lines contain a graceful compliment to Queen Elizabeth. She never married, and hence might very appropriately be referred to as "fair vestal," or "imperial votaress."

152. As: as if.

153. might: could, was able to.

156. fancy-free: free from the power of love.

160. love-in-idleness: the pansy, or heart's-ease, is so named in a book of flowers published in 1595.

166. leviathan: the whale.

174. the soul of love: the most intense love.

178. I am invisible: said for the benefit of the audience. The *Diary* of Philip Henslowe, the most famous stage manager of the time, gives a list of stage properties among which is "a cloak to go invisible in." The quarrel between the mortals follows quickly upon the fairy disagreement, and it is important that Oberon should be a witness.

182. slayeth me: because I love her and cannot win her.

184. wood: mad. Note the pun.

187–9. A difficult passage. The probable meaning is: "You draw me to you as the lode-stone draws iron; but I am not iron, though my heart is true as steel." **adamant**: the lode-stone, which possesses magnetic properties; there is a reference also to the hardness of adamant.

189. leave: give up.

193. nor I cannot: double negative, common in Shakespeare.

206. impeach: lay open to reproach, bring into question.

209. my privilege: my protection. **for that**: because.

213. in my respect: in my regard, from my point of view.

216. brakes: thickets.

220. Apollo . . . Daphne: In the old story Apollo pursued Daphne, who in answer to her prayer for help was changed into a laurel-tree.

221. griffin: a fabulous monster, half animal, half bird.

222. bootless: useless.

224. stay thy questions: listen to thy arguments.

238–45. A beautiful passage, which seems to breathe of the open air. **oxlips**: a kind of cowslip. **woodbine**: honeysuckle. **musk-roses**: wild roses. **eglantine**: sweet briar. Except in Fairyland, as one critic remarks, these flowers would not be found growing all at the same time.

244. throws: sheds. **enamell'd skin**: a well-chosen epithet, descriptive of the intricate markings on the snake-skin.

245. weed: garment, dress.

246. streak: stroke, touch.

247. fantasies: fancies, imaginings.

255. fond: doting foolishly.

256. ere the first cock crow: all fairy business must be finished before cock-crow. Cp. "Hamlet," I. 1. 147–56.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does the Fairy recognize Puck at first? If not, why does the recognition take place?
2. What account does Puck give of himself?
3. What is the cause of the quarrel between Oberon and Titania?
4. Why is reference made to "the Indian steppe," and "the spiced Indian air"?
5. How does Oberon plan to "torment thee for this injury"?
6. Why does he bid Puck meet him "ere the first cock crow"?
7. Discuss the passage lines 147–66.

ACT II

Scene 2

The scene opens with music and offers opportunity for beautiful stage effects. Oberon carries out his plan to punish Titania. Puck obeys the orders of his master in regard to the Athenian, but makes a mistake which immediately leads to confusion. The interest of the plot is heightened by the complications which must ensue.

1. roundel: dance.

2. third part of a minute: the fairies use time divisions which are appropriate to their small dimensions. In like manner, the tasks to which Titania sets her train are tiny ones.

3. cankers: worms.

4. rere-mice: bats.

7. quaint: fine, delicate.

8. offices: duties.

9–23. A dainty little song, quite in keeping with the fairy singers.

9. double: forked.

11. newts: lizards. **blindworms**: The blindworm was a harmless kind of snake. In "Macbeth," IV. 1. 14–6, the Witches use "eye of newt" and "blindworms sting" as poisonous ingredients in their magic cauldron.

13. Philomel: the nightingale. The name comes from the old Greek myth which tells how Philomela, deeply wronged by Tereus, was changed into a nightingale and ever since has lamented her sad fate. You may read the story in any classical dictionary.

20. Spiders were thought to be poisonous.

26. aloof: at a distance.

30. ounce, or cat: panther, or wild-cat.

36. to speak troth: to tell the truth.

46. approve: test, try.

48. Who is here? Puck's mistake is both amusing and natural.

48. weeds: See note on II. 1. 245.

52. dank: damp, moist.

56. owe: own, possess.

62. darkling: in the dark.

65. fond chase: foolish and loving pursuit.

67. grace: favor.

74. as a monster: as if I were a monster.

76. sphery eyne: starlike eyes.

79. good sir, awake: She bends over him so that, upon waking, he looks up straight into her eyes and the magic flower works its charm.

86. what though? what does it matter? Note how completely Helena misunderstands the situation.

95. ripe not: do not grow ripe.

96–99. "Having reached now the highest possible degree of human wisdom, reason guides my desires to your eyes."

100. Helena thinks that Lysander is having a rather cruel joke at her expense.

105. flout: mock, jeer.

106. "Indeed, in honest truth, you do me wrong."

109. "I thought you were more of a gentleman."

116–17. "As the false beliefs that men give up are most hated by the very persons who were deceived by them."

119. The magic flower seems to cause hate, as well as love.

127. prey: act of preying. Used as in "Macbeth," II. 2. 53:

> Night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

130. an if: if.

131. of all loves: I entreat you by all that is loving. **swound**: swoon, faint.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Puck anoint the eyes of Lysander? What is the result?
2. What becomes of Hermia?
3. What complications have been created so far in the play?

ACT III

Scene 1

In this act the complications of the play reach their height. Titania, the Rustics, and the Lovers all suffer from the magic of Oberon or the mischief of Puck. The first scene brings together the rustic story and the fairy story.

2. Pat, pat: just, exactly.

4. tiring-house: dressing-room, green-room.

7. bully: familiar slang term of the time, meaning a jolly, blustering fellow.

8. There are things, etc.: Bottom, as usual, has criticism and advice to offer.

12. By'r lakin: by our ladykin, or little lady — a common oath, by the Virgin Mary. **parlous**: literally, "perilous." The word was used carelessly, however, very much as we use "awful" or "terrible"; hence what Snout says here is about equivalent to: "That's awful!"

21. prologue: to be said before the play begins; a common device at the time.

22. eight and six: lines composed alternately of eight and six syllables. For an example of this meter, see Bottom's song, lines 128–31.

26. I promise you: I assure you.

28. a lion among ladies: The difficulty about the lion, and Bottom's solution for it, is said to be based upon fact. See page 84.

34–43. This passage may be a reminiscence of an event which actually happened. "There was a spectacle presented to Queen Elizabeth upon the water, and among others Harry Goldingham was to represent Arion on the dolphin's back; but finding his voice to be very harsh and unpleasant, when he came to perform it, he tears off his disguise, and swears that he was none of Arion, not he, but even honest Harry Goldingham; which blunt discovery pleased the queen better than if it had gone through the right way; yet he could order his voice to an instrument exceed-

ing well." You will find the incident made use of by Scott in his novel "Kenilworth."

36. defect: he means, of course, "effect."

40. pity of my life: a common phrase — "a great pity."

49. a calendar: An old almanac for 1591 shows at the top of the page a picture of the full moon, with these words: "Full Moone, the xxvi day, Monday, at two aclocke and xlix min. in the morning."

55–6. a bush of thorns and a lanthorn: The man in the moon was popularly represented at the time with a bundle of thorn fagots and a dog. The reason for this is not clear to us, but to Bottom and his friends it was a matter of course.

56. disfigure: Quince means "set forth," or "figure forth."

63. present: act the part of.

72. cue: signal for the next player to begin.

73. hempen home-spuns: country-bred fellows, clad in rough attire.

75. a play toward: a play about to begin. It should be noted that the portion rehearsed here does not come into the play as presented before the Duke. Perhaps Peter Quince revised his manuscript and made some changes.

84. Puck seizes the opportunity to play his trick on Bottom.

91. juvenal: youth — one of the big words that these actors like. **Jew**: meaningless; put in for the sake of the jingling rhyme. Do not try to make much sense out of the Rustics' play.

94. Ninus' tomb: According to the original story of Pyramus and Thisbe, Ninus was a king of Assyria who founded Nineveh. Pyramus was a youth of Babylon.

108. a knavery: a trick. Bottom has no idea of the true state of things. Perhaps the ass's head is as natural to him as his own.

112. You see an ass-head of your own, do you? A common retort of Shakespeare's day.

115. translated: transformed.

120. ousel cock: male blackbird.

122. throstle: song-thrush.

123. little quill: shrill note.

127. plain-song cuckoo: the cuckoo, with his monotonous note. "Plain-song" is a simple melody.

130. set his wit to so foolish a bird: match his wit against a cuckoo.

135. thy fair virtue's force: the power of thy beauty.

141. I can gleek upon occasion: I can make jokes when the time comes. Bottom is rather proud of his jesting reply to Titania.

148. still: always, constantly. **tend upon**: wait upon.

159. apricocks and dewberries: apricots and blackberries.

164. To have my love to bed, and to arise: to lead him to bed, and to assist him when he rises.

172. I cry your worships mercy: an ordinary form of apology. The contrast here between the bulky shape of Bottom and the dainty forms that surround him is of course very ridiculous.

176. if I cut my finger: cobwebs were sometimes used to stanch blood.

185. your patience: your endurance; that is, in bearing what you have to put up with from the giant ox-beef.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the difficulties which the Rustics find in their play? How are they overcome?
2. Why does Puck interfere?
3. Does Bottom realize the change that has come on him?
4. Can you explain the joke in lines 137–41? Is there reason that Bottom should be so proud of it?
5. How does Shakespeare develop the contrast between Titania and Bottom?
6. Where is Puck during the latter part of the scene?

ACT III

Scene 2

The height of the complication. Titania is completely bewitched, and the Lovers are in such dire distress that Oberon himself arranges to undo the mischief caused by Puck.

3. in extremity: in the highest degree.

5. night-rule: revelry.

6–34. Puck's description of what has occurred is given in very picturesque and vigorous fashion.

7. close: secret.

9. patches: fools — so called from the patched, or motley-colored, dress of the professional fool. **rude mechanicals**: ignorant workingmen.

10. Athenian stalls: shops in Athens.

13. barren sort: stupid company.

14. presented: played the part of.

17. nowl: pate, noddle.

19. mimick: player, actor. "Mime" was an old word for actor.

20. eye: see.

21. russet-pated choughs: gray-headed jackdaws. **in sort**: in company.

25. at our stamp: at the sound of Puck's footsteps.

30. The subject of "catch" is "briers and thorns," in the preceding line.

32. sweet: used jokingly. Cp. V. 1. 318:

> She hath spied him already with these sweet eyes.

and IV. 1. 45:

> See'st thou this sweet sight?

36. latch'd: moistened, anointed.

40. of force must she be ey'd: of necessity she must be seen.

41. Stand close: hide yourself.

43–87. We last saw Hermia at the close of II. 2. as she sets out to find Lysander. In the course of her wanderings she has come upon Demetrius. She asks him about Lysander; he

knows nothing and cares less and follows her with words of love. Finally she goes, forbidding him to pursue her. He, like a sensible fellow, lies down to sleep.

53. this whole earth: the solid earth.

55. her brother's noontide: the sun. Phoebus, the sun god, was the brother of Diana, the moon goddess. **Antipodes**: the people at the opposite side of the world. Look up the derivation of the word.

57. dead: deadly.

62. What's this to my Lysander? What has this got to do with my Lysander?

64. A bloodthirsty remark, which Demetrius probably does not altogether mean.

70. brave touch: a fine stroke, a noble exploit. Spoken sarcastically.

74. You spend your passion on a misprized mood: You are wasting your energy on a mistaken caprice. Demetrius is a little bored with all this talk about Lysander.

78. "Even if I could, what would I get for that?"

84–7. A highly metaphorical passage. The meaning may thus be put into prose: The burden of sorrow grows heavier because sleep owes it a debt that cannot be paid; but sleep will pay the debt in some slight measure if I wait here for his offer.

88–91. Oberon gathers that Demetrius needs to be turned to Helena, and sends Puck to find her. In the meantime he anoints the eyes of the sleeping lover. The coming of Helena, of course, complicates things all the more, as there are now two men in love with her and none with Hermia.

90. misprison: mistake.

92–3. "For one man who is true, a million are false, breaking one oath after another." Puck is cynical on the subject of human love.

96. fancy-sick: love-sick. **cheer**: face, countenance.

97. that cost the fresh blood dear: It was an old superstition that each sigh cost a drop of blood.

99. against: in preparation for.

101. the Tartar's bow: The Tartars were a tribe in western Asia famous for their archery.

103. Cupid's archery: See II. 1. 158.

113. a lover's fee: the rights of a lover.

114. fond pageant: foolish spectacle.

119. sport alone: unequalled sport, the best of fun.

121. preposterously: perversely.

129. truth kills truth: If Lysander's present vows are true then his former vows to Helena must be false. The two truths fighting thus make a "devilish-holy fray."

133. will even weigh: will counterbalance each other. **as light as tales**: as worthless as idle words.

136–7. A most dramatic touch. The confident assertion of Lysander is flatly contradicted by the first words of Demetrius.

137–44. This extravagant language reminds us of some of the poetry written at the time. Compare, for instance, these lines from a poem composed by Thomas Lodge in 1595:

> Like to the clear in highest sphere
> Where all imperial glory shines,
> Of self-same color is her hair
> Whether unfolded, or in twines . . .
> With orient pearl, with ruby red,
> With marble white, with sapphire blue
> Her body every way is fed,
> Yet soft in touch and sweet in view.

141. Taurus' snow: snow on the summit of Mount Taurus.

143–4. Demetrius here attempts to take the hand of Helena, which she indignantly withdraws.

146. to set against me: to attack.

147. civil: polite, well-mannered.

148. injury: insult.

150. join in souls: join heart and soul, join heartily.

157. a trim exploit! a fine thing to do!

159. sort: quality, kind.

160–1. extort A poor soul's patience: wrest her patience from her.

169. I will none: I don't want anything to do with her.

171. " My heart stayed with her only as a visitor."

175. aby it dear: pay dearly for it, make up for it.

138. fiery oes and eyes of light: the stars. Circular disks of metal, used for ornaments, were called " oes."

192. Helena is utterly puzzled, and thinks the others are united to make fun of her.

195. injurious: insulting.

196. contrived: plotted. " Contrive " is always used by Shakespeare in a bad sense.

197. bait: tease, make fun of. The word comes from " bear-baiting," a brutal sport of the time, wherein a bear was tied to a stake and worried by dogs.

198. counsel: secrets, confidences.

202. childhood innocence: the innocence of childhood. The expression finds a counterpart in " The Merchant of Venice," I. 1. 144–5:

> I urge this childhood proof
> Because what follows is pure innocence.

203. artificial gods: gods of art, creating a flower in embroidery as the real gods create field flowers.

204. needls: an old form of " needles."

205. sampler: piece of embroidery work. Samplers, as the name implies, were used to teach children how to make " samples " of different things — the letters of the alphabet, birds, flowers, etc.

213–4. The critic Douce explains the passage thus: " Helen says: ' we had had two seeming bodies but only one heart.' She then exemplifies her position by a simile — ' we had two of the first, *i.e.* bodies, like the double coats in heraldry that belong to man and wife as one person but which, like one single heart, have but one crest.' "

215. rent: an old form for " rend."

237. persever: accent on the second syllable, as always in Shakespeare. **sad**: serious, solemn. This is the usual meaning of the word in the plays.

238. Make mouths upon me: make faces at me.

239. hold the sweet jest up: keep up your fine joke, carry it on.

240. well carried: well worked out.

242. argument: subject for jest.

252. by that: by my life.

255. Lysander challenges Demetrius to fight. From this point things become very exciting and the stage is full of movement.

257. you Ethiope! you negro! Hermia was a brunette, while Helena was fair.

259. a tame man: spiritless, cowardly.

260. thou burr! Hermia is clinging to Lysander.

265. Helena still thinks Hermia is in the plot against her.

267–8. bond: note the pun on the word.

272. what news, my love? what is it? what has happened?

274. erewhile: before, just now.

283. The quarrel has now shifted to the two girls, whose language becomes very expressive. During the dispute the two men draw apart and watch them.

288. you counterfeit, you puppet: you doll imitating humanity.

290. compare: comparison.

300. curst: bad-tempered, spiteful. At this point Helena gets behind the men, for protection.

301. shrewishness: scolding speech.

302. a right maid: a true maid, a real girl.

310. stealth: stealing away.

323. shrewd: sharp-tongued.

324. vixen: a cross, spiteful, snarling person.

329–30. minimus: tiny creature. **knot-grass**: a kind of weed that was supposed to stunt the growth of children. **bead**: As beads were usually black the word here conveys a double insult.

333. intend: offer.

335. aby: See note, line 175.

338. cheek by jole: side by side, close together.

339. "All this trouble is your fault." As Hermia speaks, she advances on Helena. The latter starts back, and finally runs away.

345. still thou mistak'st: you are always making mistakes.

346. knaveries: mischievous tricks.

347–53. Puck is not at all repentant. "I was mistaken," he says, "but didn't you tell me that I should recognize the man by his Athenian dress? At least I anointed the eyes of an Athenian. And I'm glad it fell out so, because I have enjoyed their quarreling."

355. Hie: hasten.

356. welkin: sky, heavens.

357. Acheron: In ancient mythology, one of the four rivers of the Lower World, known as the "River of Darkness." We are to suppose that the fog shuts down almost instantly, and that the rest of the Act is played out in mist-choked night.

358. testy: hot-tempered.

361. wrong: insult.

362. rail: scold.

364. death-counterfeiting sleep: sleep that resembles death.

365. This line suggests both the weariness and the darkness that cause sleep. **batty**: bat-like.

367. virtuous property: healthful quality, beneficial power.

369. wonted: usual.

370–3. Oberon will cause the wandering lovers to marry and "live happy ever after."

372. wend: go.

374. Whiles: while.

378–87. Supernatural beings, as Puck says, have no power in the day-time. They must return to their respective abodes before dawn. Cp. "Hamlet," I. 1. 147–56, and I. 5. 86–89.

379. night's swift dragons: the dragons that draw the car of Night.

380. Aurora's harbinger: the morning star. "Harbinger," literally, was an officer sent before a royal party to arrange for lodgings, etc.

383. The bodies of those who had committed suicide were buried at cross roads with a stake driven through their hearts. Suicides, and drowned persons, were supposed to wander about because they lacked proper burial. **damned**: condemned to punishment. **floods**: rivers.

388–93. "But we are no mere ghosts. I have often gone hunting with Cephalus and, clad like a forester, may walk the forest till sunrise." Cephalus was "the morning's love" — the youth beloved by Aurora, goddess of the dawn.

392. Neptune: the ocean.

402. drawn: with sword drawn.

422. Abide me: wait for me.

439. curst and sad: cross and melancholy.

461–4. Old proverbs, familiar to Elizabethans.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Write out in your own words Puck's account of his dealings with Titania and Bottom.
2. Why is Hermia so angry with Demetrius? Why doesn't Demetrius follow her when she leaves?
3. Is Puck sorry for his mistake?
4. What does Helena think about the wooing of Lysander and Demetrius?
5. Why do the two men want to fight?
6. Who is the more to blame in the quarrel between Hermia and Helena?
7. Why does Oberon call Puck "Robin"? What does he tell him to do?
8. Give the reasons for Puck's reply: "My fairy lord, this must be done with haste."
9. Is it natural that the four Lovers should all wander back to the same part of the forest? Does Shakespeare make it *seem* natural?
10. How does Puck arrange that "all shall be well"?

ACT IV

Scene 1

This act ends the " dream " part of the play. Titania is freed from her enchantment, Bottom loses his ass-head, and the Lovers waken to reconciliation and happiness. Structurally considered, the interesting thing is the way in which all this is managed — the appearance of Theseus seems to clear away all the mists and shadows of sleep.

1–44. Note the contrast between the dainty blank verse of Titania and the heavy prose spoken by Bottom.

2. amiable: lovely. Used to-day only in relation to human beings. **coy**: stroke, smooth.

16. overflown: flooded, half-drowned.

19. neaf: fist.

20. leave your courtesy: keep your hat on, don't bow to me. Mustard-seed is bowing, and Bottom tries to behave like a courtier.

25. such a tender ass: Is Bottom conscious of the change?

29. the tongs and the bones: In the Folios there is a Stage Direction: *Musick Tongs, Rurall Musick.* The " tongs " seem to have been a triangle played with a metal bar.

33. a bottle of hay: a bundle of hay. The word is still locally used in England; it survives in the expression " to look for a needle in a bottle of hay."

38. exposition: he means " disposition."

39–44. Bottom asleep in the arms of the Fairy Queen is the height of the grotesque.

40. be all ways away: go away in all directions.

42. female ivy: because " married " to the elm.

45. this sweet sight: said half in disgust and half in pity.

46. dotage: love-madness.

47. behind the wood: outside it.

48. favors: nosegays of flowers.

53. orient: bright, gleaming. The word also meant " from the east," " from the sunrise." Hence such expressions as " orient pearl," " orient colors."

57. begged my patience: begged that I would be patient.

65–8. Note here, and in various later passages, the insistence upon the "dream" idea.

72. Dian's bud: See III. 2. 366–69.

Stage Direction: *Music, still:* "Soft music." Such music was usually played with flute and some stringed instrument.

84. Sound, music! This is plainly the signal for louder music, after Puck has removed the ass's head from Bottom.

92. mark: listen carefully.

94. silence sad: gave silence, restrained silence.

102. find out the forester: the chief huntsman. The entry of Theseus, with his cheerful daylight talk of hounds and hunting, marks the return of everyday life.

103. our observation: they have been celebrating May-day in the woods. See note on I. i. 167.

104. vaward: the first part, the earliest hours.

105. the music of my hounds: Theseus is a true sportsman.

106. Uncouple: cast off the leashes.

107. Dispatch: hurry up!

111. Hercules and Cadmus: Hercules was the "strong man" of Greek mythology; Cadmus, the founder of Troy. There is a confusion of time — an anachronism — in bringing them together and joining Hippolyta with them, but Shakespeare was not careful about such things and the point is of no importance here.

112. bay'd the bear: brought him to bay.

113. hounds of Sparta: Spartan hounds were especially admired for their speed and their keen scent.

114. chiding: loud barking; used also of any confused noise.

119. flew'd: having an overhanging lip on the upper jaw. **sanded**: tawny yellow, sand color. Shakespeare seems to write as a lover of dogs.

121. dew-lapp'd: with loose skin under the throat.

122. match'd in mouth like bells: some higher, some lower, like a chime of bells. Huntsmen in Shakespeare's day were accustomed to "match the voices" of their packs. Following is a quotation from a sporting writer of the time: "If you would have your Kennel for sweetness of cry, then you must compound

it of some large dogs, that have deep solemn Mouths, and are swift in spending, which must as it were bear the base in the consort; then a double number of roaring, and loud-ringing Mouths, which must bear the counter-tenor; then some hollow plain sweet Mouths, which must bear the main or middle part; and so with these three parts of Musick, you shall make your cry perfect." MARKHAM'S "Country Contentments." **mouth**: voice.

132. intent: intention.

133. in grace of our solemnity: to do honor to our observance of the day.

138. Saint Valentine: February 14. The day was the appropriate time for mating in England — it was traditionally the time for birds to choose their mates.

142. gentle concord: kind friendliness.

144. by hate: beside, close to, hate.

145. amazedly: confusedly. The conversation of the Lovers, to the end of the Act, marks very plainly the transition from dream to reality — from the forest magic to the familiar life of Athens.

151–2. where we might, Without the peril of Athenian law: anywhere we could that was outside the reach of Athenian law.

153–8. The anger of Egeus is well indicated by the peculiar repetition in his speech. **you have enough**: that is, enough evidence to convict him.

159. their stealth: their stealing away.

162. fancy: love.

163. I wot not: I do not know.

166. an idle gaud: a foolish trifle.

177. discourse: story, tale. **anon**: by and by.

181. for: since. **worn**: past, used up.

186–98. This little talk between the Lovers serves most delightfully to blend the dream with reality.

188. with parted eye: her eyes do not appear to work together, and everything seems double.

199–216. When Bottom awakes, he is sure that all that has happened has been a dream. The dream is quite beyond his

powers of explanation, but we can see that it will lose nothing in the telling.

202. God's my life! a common oath of the time.

208. a patched fool: a motley fool — so called from the patched, or motley, garb worn by a jester.

216. at her death: at Thisbe's death. Bottom's mind is full of the play.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The contrast between Bottom and Titania.
2. What is the significance of Oberon's remark: "See'st thou this sweet sight?"
3. Why is the charm removed?
4. Why does Puck give warning about the "morning lark"? Where do Oberon and Titania go?
5. The dramatic value of the "hunting-horns."
6. Why have Theseus and Hippolyta come to the forest?
7. Explain the dramatic significance of their conversation about dogs and hunting.
8. How does old Egeus feel about it all?
9. What is the object of the brief conversation between the Lovers before they follow Theseus?
10. Why didn't Bottom wake up when the others woke?

ACT IV

Scene 2

This scene leads on directly to Act V. Bottom is restored to his fellows, and all the woodland wanderers are once more in Athens.

4. transported: transformed, transfigured.

5. marred: ruined. **it goes not forward**: it will not take place.

8. discharge: act.

14. a thing of naught: a worthless object.

17. we had all been made men: we would have made our fortunes.

19. sixpence a day: Actors were sometimes pensioned. There is record of one who, for his acting in "Cambyses," received a shilling a day for life.

23. where are these hearts: these fine fellows. Bottom's entry is delightfully effective. We can almost hear the yells of joy as his big jolly voice breaks in, and they all rush up and crowd around him.

24. O most courageous day! Perhaps Quince means "encouraging."

26. I am to discourse wonders: I've got strange things to tell you.

28. right: exactly.

30. Not a word of me. Like a good story-teller, Bottom keeps his friends in suspense.

32. good strings: to tie on your false beards. **pumps**: low shoes.

33. presently: at once.

34. preferred: recommended for acceptance. It was one of the four mentioned by his Master of the Revels in Act V.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the effect upon his friends of Bottom's absence? Of his sudden return?
2. Why doesn't he tell them his story?
3. Explain: "Our play is preferred."

ACT V

Scene 1

The practical common sense of Theseus puts the final bar between the fantastic events of the past night and the solid happiness which now awaits the Lovers. The Duke does not believe a word of the strange tale told by Demetrius and the rest — his robust mentality revolts against fairies and all such "antique fables." The whole Act is devoted to the Rustics' Interlude, with the fairy scene coming in at the end as a kind of Epilogue.

2. I never may believe: I never can believe.

3. antique fables: strange, fantastic stories. **fairy toys**: silly fairy-tales.

4. seething brains: hot, boiling brains, brains full of wild imaginings. Macbeth speaks of

> a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.

5. shaping fantasies: creative imaginations.

5–6. "The brains of lovers and madmen reach out for more than the cooler mind can ever fully grasp."

8. compact: made up of, formed, composed.

11. Helen's beauty: Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman in the world. **a brow of Egypt**: a dark swathy face, like a gypsy's. Gypsies were called "Egyptians," because of the old belief that they came originally from Egypt.

14. bodies forth: gives them a bodily form.

19–20. "If it only wishes to seize some joy, it will create for itself the bringer of that joy."

25–7. Hippolyta thinks that the consistency of the Lovers' stories shows that there is more in them than mere imagination — wonderful as they are. **witnesseth**: bears witness. **constancy**: consistency. **admirable**: wonderful.

31. walks: estate, grounds.

32. masques: The masque was a popular form of entertainment in Shakespeare's day. See page 89.

34. after-supper: the "rere-supper"—the last course or dessert.

35. manager of mirth: the Master of the Revels, an officer in charge of all Court entertainments.

39. abridgement: something to make the time pass quickly, a pastime. Hamlet says, as the Players enter (II. 2. 439): "Look, where my abridgements come."

41. the lazy time: because it moves slowly and we have nothing to do.

42. brief: condensed statement. **ripe**: ready.

44. The battle with the Centaurs: The Centaurs were fabulous creatures, half man, half horse. Hercules fought with them when he was in pursuit of the Erymanthian Boar.

47. my kinsman Hercules: The "Life of Theseus," in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's "Lives," contains the following passage: "The wonderful admiration which Theseus had of Hercules' courage, made him in the night that he never dreamed but of his noble acts and doings, and in the daytime, pricked forwards with emulation and envy of his glory, he determined with himself one day to do the like, and the rather, because they were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother's side."

48–9. Orpheus, the "Thracian singer," was torn to pieces by the frenzied followers of Bacchus.

50. device: subject.

51. Thebes: The reference is to one of the exploits of Theseus. It is mentioned in Chaucer's "Knightes Tale."

52–5. For a discussion of this passage, see page 83. **critical**: fault-finding, censorious. **sorting with**: suitable for.

70. passion: used of any strong feeling.

74. toiled their unbreathed memories: wearied their unpracticed memories.

75. against: See Note, III. 2. 99.

79. intents: intentions.

80. extremely stretched: strained to the utmost. **conned**: learned by heart.

81–2. A remark that shows the fine courtesy of Theseus. "Nothing can be unsuitable when it is offered by simplicity and a sense of duty."

85–6. Hippolyta does not like to see these Athenians attempt too much, when they "can do nothing in this kind."

89–92. "If they can do nothing, all the kinder we to praise their failure. Our amusement shall be in noting their blunders. But," he adds, more seriously, "if you look at it as a noble mind should, you will judge it as it might have been, as it was intended to be, and not as it actually is."

93–105. There seems to be a reference here to some of the experiences of Queen Elizabeth upon her royal "Progresses," when elaborate addresses were presented at the larger towns in which she stayed. **clerks**: learned men, scholars. **Throttle their practis'd accent**: choke their carefully-rehearsed speeches. **fearful**: timorous.

104–5. It is clear that Peter Quince and his company will suffer no indignity at the hands of the good Duke. **to my capacity**: as I understand it.

106. Prologue: a familiar figure on the Elizabethan stage. Usually he came forward at the beginning of the play and told about the plot; sometimes he apologized for the shortcomings of the performance. Both these uses appear here. For similar examples, in more serious vein, read the Prologue — or "Chorus," as it is called in the play — before each Act of "King Henry V." **address'd**: ready.

Stage Direction: *Flourish of Trumpets:* a signal that the play was about to commence. Throughout the performance, Theseus and his friends keep up a running comment which is very amusing. "Pyramus and Thisbe" is a burlesque upon the older form of drama — such a play as might be written by an inexperienced writer for an uneducated company. Thus we find defective rhyme and meter, incorrect classical allusions, ridiculous mispronunciations ("old Ninny's tomb," for instance), false sentiment, and an over-abundance of exclamations. The play was revised and the prologue written by Quince, and it is just the sort of play that we should expect him to make.

108–17. Note the mispunctuation of the lines, which gives a totally different sense from what was intended. When corrected, they run as follows:

> If we offend, it is with our good will
> That you should think we come not to offend,
> But with good will to show our simple skill.
> That is the true beginning of our end.
> Consider then; we come; but in despite
> We do not come. As minding to content you,
> Our true intent is all for your delight.
> We are not here that you should here repent you.
> The actors are at hand; and by their show
> You shall know all that you are like to know.

The absurdity of Prologue's opening strikes the keynote to the absurdity of the whole play.

118. This fellow doth not stand upon points: A pun upon the two meanings of "points" — (1) he isn't very particular about what he says, and (2) he doesn't mind his punctuation points.

119. rid: ridden.

120. stop: a term in horsemanship, with a pun on the other meaning of the word, a "stop" in punctuation.

123. recorder: a kind of flute, much used at the time. **in government**: under control.

134. lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn: The man in the moon was thus represented in old pictures.

136. did . . . think no scorn: did not disdain, did not hesitate to.

138. hight: called — an old-fashioned word, even in Shakespeare's day. It is used here, like "certain" in line 129, to give an archaic touch.

141. fall: let fall.

145–6. In these lines Shakespeare makes fun of the practice of "alliteration" which was frequently reduced to an absurdity by poets of his time. He ridicules the same extravagance in "Love's Labor's Lost," IV. 2. 57–9:

The preyful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing
pricket;
Some say a sore; but not a sore, till now made sore with shooting.

150. at large discourse: tell in full.

162. sinister: This long word pleases the Rustics, and forms a sort of rhyme to "whisper" — but what a rhyme!

183–6. A delightfully humorous touch. Bottom forgets all about the part of Pyramus, and answers the Duke directly.

195–203. These lines contain some amusing mispronunciations. **Limander** and **Helen** are meant for Leander and Hero, the lovers who met after Leander had swum the Hellespont; **Shafalus** and **Procrus** represent an effort to pronounce Cephalus and Procris, two faithful lovers of classic myth. **old Ninny's tomb** was, of course, the tomb of the ancient king, Ninus. His name, by the way, is a constant source of trouble to the actors.

203. 'Tide life, 'tide death: whether life or death betide.

206. mural: the wall.

210–4. Hippolyta is disgusted — she has no sense of humor. Theseus answers her objection, in his wise and tolerant way, saying that even the best plays are only shadows of reality and the worst can be no worse than shadows — if imagination helps them.

215–6. Another remark which reveals the broad and kindly disposition of Theseus.

218–25. A part has been written for Lion, as Bottom suggested.

223. lion-fell: lion-skin.

246. in snuff: needs snuffing. A pun here, also: to be "in snuff" meant to be offended.

265. moused: as a cat shakes a mouse.

274. dole: grief, sorrow.

280. Furies fell: By the ancients, the Furies were supposed to punish crime that was undiscovered by human beings. **fell**: cruel.

281. the Fates: the three mysterious beings who controlled the destiny of man. Lachesis spun the thread of life, Clotho measured it off, Atropos severed it. Of Atropos, Milton wrote:

Comes the dread Fury with the abhorred shears
And slits the thin-spun life.

282. Cut thread and thrum: cut it off completely. The "thrum" was the end of the thread in weaving.

284–5. This remark of Theseus reminds us of the old proverb: "He who hath lost his wife and sixpence hath lost — sixpence." **sad**: serious.

286. Beshrew: a playful oath.

290. cheer: cheerfulness.

291. confound: ruin, destroy.

303–8. A sequence of puns. The verb "die" suggests the noun "die" — the singular of "dice" — which in turn suggests "ace," and this suggests "ass."

308. Perhaps a reference to Bottom's experience in the forest.

309. How chance: how does it happen.

312. passion: grief.

313. a long one: a long drawn out "passion" or lament.

315. a mote: the least thing.

320. videlicet: that is to say.

331. make moan: grieve, weep.

332. leeks: A "leek" is a species of onion. The simile is not very romantic.

333. Sisters three: the three Fates.

341. imbrue: make bloody. An old stage tradition provides that Thisbe, in her confusion, stabs herself with the scabbard instead of the blade.

349. Bergomask dance: a clumsy rustic dance. Bergamo was an Italian town, the inhabitants of which used to be laughed at for their clownish behavior.

354–5. Theseus is a thorough gentleman. He thinks that the jesting has gone far enough, and contrives to make the Players happy by a word of praise. "Yours was a fine tragedy," he says, "and excellently performed."

357. told: counted, recorded.

361. palpable-gross play: plainly crude and clumsy. Bottom and his friends have gone, or Theseus would not speak so frankly. **beguiled**: whiled away.

363. solemnity: wedding festivity. See I. 1. 11.

367. heavy: tired.

368. fordone: exhausted.

369. wasted brands: logs that have been consumed, dying embers.

370–1. The owl was considered a bird of ill-omen, and gave warning of death.

378. the triple Hecate: the goddess who was Phoebe in the heavens, Diana on earth, and Hecate in the Lower World.

381. frolic: merry.

383–4. Puck was the "house fairy." He was a helpful, as well as a mischievous, spirit: he would make the fire in the morning, draw water, and sweep the house at midnight. His popular name of Robin Goodfellow marks his general friendliness.

394. Dr. Johnson thought that two songs had been lost from the play; one here, led by Titania, and the other following line 407, led by Oberon.

399. consecrate: holy, consecrated.

400. take his gait: make his way.

401. several: separate.

408–13. Shakespeare wishes the audience to carry away a strong impression of the dream-like quality of his play.

414. reprehend: blame, find fault with.

418. to 'scape the serpent's tongue: to escape being hissed because of poor acting.

422. Give me your hands: give applause by clapping. Cp. "All's Well That Ends Well," V. 3. 340:

> Your gentle hands lend us and take our hearts.

423. restore amends: make all well.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does Theseus think of the tale told by the Lovers? Does Hippolyta agree with him?

2. Comment upon the lines: "The lunatic, the lover and the poet . . . a local habitation and a name."

3. Why does Theseus choose the play of Pyramus and Thisbe from those submitted to him by Philostrate? How does he answer the objections of Hippolyta?

4. How would you set the stage for the play?

5. Do the remarks of the audience add to the humor of the situation? What is the effect of these remarks upon the Players?

6. Read carefully the comments made by Theseus throughout the performance. Are they sarcastic, or merely good-natured witticisms? What does he mean by saying of the play that it was a "fine tragedy" and "notably discharged"? What is the feeling of Hippolyta?

7. How would you light and set the stage for the fairy scene which closes the play?

8. Why does Puck say: "If we shadows have offended," etc.?

9. Point out in what ways the lines of Puck form a fitting close to "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

SUBJECTS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION

1. Theseus, the Good Duke.

[Make a little study of his character, from the slight hints given in the play.]

2. Characterization in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

[Compare any of the leading characters with those of other Shakespeare plays with which you are familiar. You will probably find that the former are sketched in lightly and not very carefully developed. Was this due to Shakespeare's lack of experience or would you assign it to the type of the play? Would the depicting of strong emotion have added to the value of the plot?]

3. The Fairies.

[Do you find them as interesting as those which you have met in fairy tales? Can you imagine anything about the sort of fairy tales which Shakespeare might have read as a boy?]

4. Robin Goodfellow.

[Hunt up references to him in books recommended by your librarian. Read what Kipling writes about him in "Puck of Pook's Hill" and "Rewards and Fairies."]

5. Bottom and His Friends.

[They are placed in Athens — do they seem to you like Athenians? Did Shakespeare try to make them like Athenians? Would it have been better if he had made them real Greeks, as his friend Ben Jonson undoubtedly would have done?]

6. The Changed Seasons.

[Read Titania's complaint, II. 1. 81–116. Which of the theories as to the meaning of these lines, mentioned on page 82, seems to you most reasonable?]

7. The Masque-like Elements in the Play.

[Point out the parts which appear to be especially well adapted to beautiful effects, both scenic and musical. Are these more noticeable than in other plays? Does Shakespeare seem to lay more stress upon this feature of his work than upon the development of character?]

8. " Allegories " in the Play.

[Read carefully II. 1. 141–6, 147–56, and look up what is said about these lines on page 90. Then try to form an opinion of your own as to what seems the most reasonable interpretation from a dramatic point of view.]

9. Music in the Play.

[Note how often music is suggested. The most famous incidental music written for the play is that composed by Mendelssohn. Get some one to play it for you — especially the " Spring Song " and the " Wedding March." Then judge for yourself as to its value as interpreting the meaning of the play.]

10. Stage-setting.

[If you were a stage manager, with a good theatre at your command, how would you set the stage for the fairy scenes? What would be your conception of the palace of Theseus? Of Peter Quince's house?]

11. The " Dream Motive."

[Discuss the Dream idea as found in other plays, or in novels. What is the advantage to an author of using this mode of construction? What are the disadvantages?]

12. Puck and Oberon.

[What do you take to be the relations between Puck and Oberon? Here are some of the passages which may be suggestive:

I jest to Oberon and make him smile.
Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.
King of shadows.
My fairy lord.]

Subjects for Composition.

13. Shakespeare's Stage Directions.

[None of the stage directions which you see printed in italics were put in by Shakespeare. You will find his directions in the text. For instance, Egeus says (I.1.127): "With duty and desire we follow you," and follows Theseus off the stage. Oberon cries (III. 2. 4): "Here comes my messenger. . . . How now, mad spirit?" and Puck runs in. Many other directions are given, such as: "Fairies, skip hence." "Sound, music!" Make a list of as many as you can find. You will be interested to see how carefully Shakespeare has pointed out the movements of his characters. The subject will afford excellent material for a class talk.]

14. "A Little Western Flower."

[Two flowers with magic properties are mentioned in the play — what are they? Do you know of any other flower superstitions? You will find a famous passage in "Hamlet," IV. 5. 175–86.]

15. "I Know a Bank Whereon the Wild Thyme Blows."

[Can you find other passages in the play which seem to show Shakespeare's love of country life? A most interesting comparison may be made between such passages and Milton's "L'Allegro." You might care to hunt up the beautiful flower lines in the same poet's "Lycidas."]

16. Greek Stories Referred to in the Play.

[Make a collection of these references. What conclusion do you draw as to Shakespeare's knowledge and use of mythology?]

17. The Story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

[Read it in a classical dictionary. Why was it so popular with Elizabethan audiences? Do you see any good points in Peter Quince's play?]

18. My Favorite Passages in the Play.

[Quote several and explain your choice.]

19. A Day at the Court of Theseus.

[Imagine yourself a guest of the Duke. Describe his palace and his attendants. What amusements would he provide for you?]

20. A Visit to Peter Quince.

[You call at Peter Quince's house on the morning after the play has been given at the palace. The whole company is talking it over. By and by Bottom tells about his "most rare vision" in the forest. Try to write it all in the form of a one-act play.]

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